ESSAYS IN CHRISTIAN THINKING

By A. T. Cadoux

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IN
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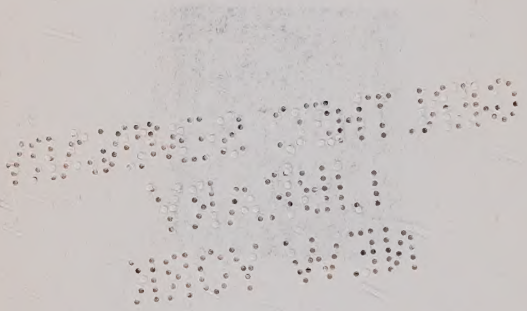

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TO

MY WIFE

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ESSAYS IN CHRISTIAN THINKING

I

THE PRONOUNCEMENTS OF PERSONALITY

(1) GOD IN OUR BEST

THE hoardings of a city are sometimes billed with a strange name, and then, when its strangeness has duly impressed us, we are informed that it is the name of a patent medicine that will indubitably cure a multitude of diseases, the perusal of whose symptoms suggests our necessity, and so we buy and try, with such result as befits the wisdom of our procedure. And most people assume that our knowledge of God grows similarly, first a name for which we have to find a meaning, that having found a meaning we may cultivate an experience. The assumption has truth enough to make it respectable, and falsehood enough to make it always harmful and often fatal. It is a true account of the growth of a false notion of God and therefore describes accurately a great deal of modern religious nurture. The belief so produced is belief in a preposterous and disintegrating god, but happily

it often results in unbelief, though even so, the loss is great, for the development into conscious life of a more wholesome belief is prevented.

Now whatever we may think of God, we do not think of Him as one of a species but as a Being essentially unique, and we may therefore conclude that unless there is possible for us in life an experience of Him apart from all naming and recognition of Him, then we can never give His name any meaning at all, and no knowledge or experience of Him will be possible to us. His name will be to us as the names of colours or notes to those who have never seen or heard.

The first task of the religious thinker is, therefore, to see whether there are any such experiences in life, and, if so, what they are and what they mean. And we may assume that if anywhere in life we have experience of God and are at all capable of recognizing His presence, the experiences in which we do so will be our highest, so that our search sends us to examine the creation and enjoyment of the beautiful, loyalty to truth and right, love and service.

An artist, we reckon, dishonours his art when he makes it chiefly an instrument of gain or fame. To be true to it and worthy of it he must follow it for its own sake. But if, in the passion of his pursuit, he sacrifices personal interest, how does he differ from the gambler? Not at all, unless beauty has a significance in the universe apart from the intensity of the passion it arouses in certain men. There is here

for the individual an interest greater and worthier than any that attaches itself to him as an organism or as an individual over against others. For this interest he may make sacrifice of all individual interests in a way that for other ends would be insane or criminal : he acts as though he was partaking a larger rationality than the individual : he has transcended the individual and attained the universal. And the man himself has the assurance that he is not shirking reality, but the reverse ; that loyalty to beauty is loyalty to the truth of things. He could not work under the conviction that the more beautiful his work, the more out of touch with reality ; and yet the more perfect his work the further it is from the ragged appearances of the world ; and it saves its truth only by claiming to apprehend and interpret a deeper reality. So that all true pursuit of beauty implies both in its driving power and its goal that man's best work is an apprehension and expression of an invisible reality, the attainment and participation of a universal thought.

The same is true of all enjoyment of the beautiful. To make it a mere item of comfort or personal splendour is to degrade it, as we do with dinner music and court poetry. The beautiful gladdens us with more than pleasant excitation of the senses : it comes not as a momentary and fantastic release from the ugly realities of life, but as the signature of a deeper reality. We stand before unrolled miles of wide beauty, and feel that it is good, and are for

a moment freed from all pettiness and are at one with our fellows. Then we come back to the ugliness and vulgarity of a great city and are compelled to ask, Which is the real stuff of life? Is the Power behind indifferent? Then as soon let it be for the ugly, for ugliness is mere indifference to beauty ; and then beauty loses half itself because it seems a cheat, and ugliness infects the very core of life. And, so pressing the question, we see that unless beauty brings us nearer the reality behind life's appearances, then beauty is wrong and ugliness right. And our hearts know the answer to that alternative. We turn from the beautiful to the ordinary of life not with a sense of disillusionment, but with an enfranchising and defiant secret in our hearts. In beauty we apprehend a good that is recognized by a judgment native of a larger life than that of the individual animal : we see with more than mortal eye that it is very good.

In common human judgment nothing more becomes a man than loyalty to truth. We are sure that none serves the race better than he who at all costs seeks the truth. And in seeking truth we try to get away from all the idiosyncrasy and bias and interest of the individual, and to see things as they would appear to a universal Mind, and this in the confidence that so we get nearer to things as they are. Our loyalty to truth is based on the conviction that man can climb from the individual standpoint to a higher, surer ground, where he approaches

the truth and his thought co-operates with the thought of the universe.

Loyalty to duty tells the same tale. Duty is what our whole soul and the whole universe behind it bids us do : what we recognize as right is what, in our widest knowledge of both, we see our soul and its place in the universe demand. Man is surest of right and most natural in it when he sees no private interest concur. In loyalty to right man is sure that he can know and participate in an interest above the individual, a universal, world-interest. The highest, characteristic use of his will is to act as though there was a Universal Will sharing with him its secret and its endeavour.

Love, in whatever shape we think of it, is perverted if it is made the instrument of any other interest. It must either reign or rot. But if love is not the tool of selflove, a man can love only from a standpoint in which he sees himself not to be of all things most important to himself ; and the divine thing in love is that it does once or twice in a lifetime haul a man to this altitude and give him a glimpse of things from another centre than self-concern. Reduce love to selfinterest and it vanishes ; let it lift man above selfinterest and he is in a new world. To find that even one other is dearer to him than himself is to have learnt to feel and think on a level higher than the individual, as though he shared the pulsings of a Universal Heart.

It may be suggested that on this line of thought we should conclude that a hen forgetting

herself for her chicks has an experience of God. But why not? The only difficulty is that she has so little self to forget. For we must remember that the significant thing in true human love is not the mere instinct that on occasion will risk safety and life for its object, but the conscious and open-eyed enthronement in the soul of an interest capable of such action.

We know that the deepest in humanity finds its own rather in serving than in being served. Quietly and resolutely the best of our kind have come to agreement with themselves that it is better to give than to receive. They live as though there is in the world a purpose of good which they recognize rather than create, which offers them the possibility of valid achievement and needs their co-operation for its fulfilment.

In all the highest, most characteristic human endeavour and enjoyment there is a universal element, a rising to a standpoint above that of individual interest, a feeling and thinking and acting as though a universal feeling and thought and will in these moments was revealing itself in us and working with us. In these moments a man escapes selfinterest, to escape which in some directions is insanity : what saves it from being so here? Surely, that of those things of which we have seen that, in all his best, man acts as though they were—of them we must say that they are—a Universal Heart and Mind and Will.

Otherwise we must take the cynic's conclusion that all that we call highest is folly and self-

deception, the beggar dreaming of kingship, and the hungry man of a feast ; or, what is worse, we must allow the claim that it is all the man's own and so convert it into stuffing for his self-inflation.

And the great and imminent dangers of cynicism and selfrighteousness enforce the necessity for recognizing and extricating this universal, divine element in life, of getting to know what it is and what it means. For the whole way of human advance is in a progressive distinguishing, and understanding of the elements of our experience. Only as we understand the powers and possibilities of life, and the dim and mixed become conscious and distinct, can we grow in the use of our powers and enter into the greatness of our heritage.

The business of the Christian thinker, then, is to discover what is implied in that experience of God which is an essential element in all the best in life, that we may know Him more truly and experience Him more fully.

II

THE PRONOUNCEMENTS OF PERSONALITY

(2) OUR SELFHOOD IN GOD

WHEN once a man has found unthinking acceptance of hearsay religion no longer possible, he had best soon discover that he must apply here the rule of philosophy and believe nothing that he finds it possible to doubt. Otherwise religion loses driving power and imposes an additional and precariously grasped bundle upon the already burdened traveller, for only those things that we cannot help believing are strength and speed to us.

When we ask, therefore, after the ground of our faith in God any answer that proposes a balance of probabilities disqualifies itself. And the same may be said of the attempt to select facts and build upon them a logical basis for the object of our worship : such a faith is not compelling enough : it owes more to the believer than is good for his humility, and the effort it requires makes it appear a substitute for action.

If God could be proved by the production of verifiable facts and by compelling logical

deduction from them, He would to that extent be external to man's being, for the heart of human life cannot be so dealt with. The claim that God could be so proved is part of the externalizing trend that has made religion unreal. Churches have upheld it because it supplied them with a proprietary article that made their ministrations a monopoly, and it has met the vulgar desire for an external authority and for a belief unpestered by the unceasing call for action.

At best such arguments give, not a ground for faith, but a confirmation to the already convinced. But where then is faith's ground, and what is reason's place in religion? Faith is life's selfdeclaration and reason's business is to interpret and especially to mark and annihilate all misinterpretations. Religious thinking has not to attempt to create faith, but to show man that he already possesses it, to identify it amongst counterfeits, and to set it where it can know itself and come to its own and irrigate the whole of human experience with vitality.

And we do not go very far on this road, of which the last essay took a preliminary survey, before we find that the centre of faith is not belief in God, but belief in ourselves: that is the real act of faith, and belief in God is only its reasonable unfolding.

And by belief in ourselves is not intended merely belief in what is called the "better self," but belief in our rationality, in the inward oneness of our conscious life, belief that effort of

thought can bring us nearer to truth and reality, that our acts are in some degree really our own, that we are not merely parts of an infinite machine, without inward initiative and coherence.

The issue lies between these pronouncements of the self and what is supposed to be involved in a scientific view of the universe. Science assumes the oneness and orderliness of the universe, and takes it for granted that like consequences will always follow like antecedents. And if this assumption is extended to the whole of our experience it does not allow the possibility of such real alternatives as we are faced with in the choice of right or wrong. Unless in the moral life given antecedents can be followed by more than one consequent, there can be no choice and therefore no responsibility and no moral life of our own : it is not we who act, but the universe acting through us : we are not persons but things. Either we must put aside our highest as an illusion, or the oneness of the universe is not so simple a thing as science in her own domain assumes ; and as it has recently been enlarged from a mechanical unity to one that has room for life which cannot be reduced to mechanics, so it must be extended again to one that makes room for man's moral life by allowing him alternatives of choice incompatible with an entirely predetermined universe.

The necessity of this will be visible if we try to apply the assumption of universal and inevitable regularity to the moral life. Any man

who was convinced that in the moral life given antecedents could only be followed by one certain result, and that therefore he had no real choice and was not responsible, and who acted on this conviction would be reduced to a state of complete moral passivity and lack of initiative, which would classify him with the morally imbecile. And if what proffers itself as a scientific account of certain activities brings them to a full stop as soon as it is applied to them, it is scientifically unsound.

And as a matter of fact, natural science must and does confess itself incompetent to deal with certain regions of the moral life. It deals with what is, and not, in the moral sense of the word, with what ought to be. It can answer many questions but not, "Whether 'tis nobler." It may tell a man what means will achieve a given end, or what the result of achievement will be, but it cannot and does not pretend to tell him whether he ought to seek that end or not. And unless we are prepared to rule the word "ought" out of life we must regard the region of experience where there is the sort of orderliness demanded by natural science as only a part of the universe, whose total order must be of a more generous kind.

For a universe with room for moral choice is still an ordered universe. It used to be said that the claim for moral freedom was a claim to act at random and without any order. But in moral choice neither alternative is undetermined: it is really a choice of allegiance to

either of two systems. The temptation arises, through the relation of the man to his environment, as the effect of the world system on a fraction of itself : against the temptation he sets an inwardly constructed system of his various interests which represents his idea of the universe and his place in it. Volition is the bringing of this idea of the whole self and its universe to bear upon the impulse which by the interplay of the external universe upon him as an organism or social unit happens to be uppermost at the moment. And the ultimate resolve turns upon the man's belief as to what he really is, whether the thinking, willing, valuing self is the true one, or the disjointed, impulse-driven being that is the sport of externalities and incapable of being a self. The contest for freedom is a contest for a self : activity cannot be both selfconscious and predetermined or anything but selfdetermined. And belief in a self that chooses is belief in a universe where moral choice is possible and means something.

To maintain this does not split the universe into two incommunicable halves, a scientific and a moral, for the alternatives that the latter needs appear in the former as the possibility of, and difference between, truth and error. If man's inward life is really determined by preceding conditions, then the conscious endeavour after truth through determining thought by thought is an unsound and impossible one. If all human thought is determined by what precedes, then the conscious is determined by the unconscious,

and all thoughts are equally valid, being really determined by the same conditions, and there is no essential difference between a right thought and an erroneous one. But science depends upon the conviction that all thoughts are not equally valid, and therefore that they are not all the product of the same process of determination. And to recognize that thoughts are determined by processes so different as to make them differ in respect of truth and error is for the scientist to find in himself a process of determination other than that of the causal determination which he assumes to reign in the natural world.

For what is the scientific criterion of truth? A thought, "This is so," arises in the mind; its presence may be determined by a nervous disease. In any case, the scientist would regard it as part of the system of the world, causally determined. But that does not make it true for him. To be true it must be part of an inward system in which thought determines thought, and our whole sureness of possessing truth of any sort depends upon the conviction that the determination of thought by thought gives truth, and that any other determination of it gives error, or truth only by accident.

The inward system of thought determined by thought, being the systematization of our experience, has one of its most important elements in verification by experience. Only a thought that is part of such a system survives this verification, and so approves itself as re-

flecting reliably the universe in which we live, while the thought otherwise determined is speedily discovered by experience to be untrue to the universe that has caused it. Our sanity depends upon the correspondence of this inward ordering of thought by thought with the order of the universe as we experience it, and this correspondence cannot be given place in a universe containing nothing but what is causally predetermined; which might thus be an intelligible universe, but would have no place for intelligence. The determination of thought by thought is found to bring us into truer relationship with the universe than an equal acceptance of thought externally determined, which implies that the reality of the universe is more nearly kin to the thinker than to the thing.

We have found it hinted that the inwardly apprehended self that we know in moral choice has a similar backing in the universe. The choice between right and wrong is not merely between the whole of a man's systematized interests and the uppermost impulse of the moment: another element is involved. For although a man may be in doubt as to which of two possible actions is right and accords with his whole self, yet when he does see which is right, the call to do it comes to him with an absolute authority, with an authority that speaks for all, absolutely all: he cannot doubt that it is the voice of his true self, for it is the only self that can think and speak claiming its right to selfhood against a level of the universe that

would retain it in disintegration and subservience ; and in this self-sureness is the assurance that the right thing is that in which the self fulfils its true place in the universe, that in the call of duty the universe speaks and proclaims itself as at heart a Being knowing and willing the right.

The unprovable but inwardly sure thing is that it is good for man to speak truth, to do rightly and kindly, though body and fortune and reputation suffer. Faith has done her work in this self-committal, and now reason has but to unfold what sort of a universe it is that produces selves sure that they are in essence not sentient organisms or bribable vanities. Can a man continue to hold assurance that the fundamental reality of his being is that which thinks and loves and wills, and at the same time hold that the fundamental reality of the universe from which he draws his being is without thought and love and will? Reason compels him to make explicit what is implied in his assurance that the spiritual ought to be supreme in him by finding in that assurance the assertion that the spiritual is supreme in his universe.

There then lies the real act of faith, that we are persons and not things, not mere fragments of a whole, but having an inner wholeness, whose order and intelligibility are not mere deception, that when we say "I think" or "I do" we are not speaking of a nonentity performing the unintelligible, that our deeds are ours, that the true and right are at any cost good for the

self. This is the primal act of faith, in which, when we commit ourselves to it, we find the universe disclosing itself to us. In the act by which I dare to be a self the universe avers its own Selfhood.

III

THE PRONOUNCEMENTS OF PERSONALITY

(3) IN THE RELIGION OF MANKIND

THE two preceding essays may provoke the question, "If God is so intimate to human life, if faith is so inseparable from our truest activities, why do I find my belief in Him so insubstantial?" There are probably two reasons, both connected with the nature of belief.

If in the highest human activity we have experience of God, and if faith in Him is implied in the claim to selfhood and asserted in all loyalty to right, it will follow that, in so far as we are untrue to our highest, we are acting on the assumption that God is irrelevant and so confusing and inhibiting our belief in Him. To appropriate a truth we must act on it: not to act on it is to unclench its grasp of us. This is true of any belief, but especially of one that comes with and in action. So that part of the unsteadfastness of our faith in God is due to our unfaithfulness to His presence in our lives.

The second reason is also due to unfaithfulness but acting less directly. Not until religion reaches a comparatively advanced stage and

becomes a matter of individual conviction does the omission to act on the highest we know make God seem unreal. Everywhere in the earlier ages, and very widely still, religious belief is imposed by social tradition and is accepted by the individual unquestioningly as an axiom of life, as an external fact not admitting degrees of belief. Unfaithfulness to the highest cannot at this level find its simplest reaction in a diminished vividness of belief, and therefore expresses itself by assimilating the object of belief to the lower view of life chosen ; and this is all the easier, because the Object is regarded as external to man. Men came thus to believe in a God who is petty, vindictive, proud, jealous, self-concerned, tyrannous, deceitful, cruel, arbitrary. And this is as true of Christendom as of heathendom, for there are many ideas of God in the Bible, ranging from the primitive to the highest, and at all times a large part of Christendom has chosen to think of God, not as He is given in the teaching of Jesus, but as He is depicted by some more primitive or smaller mind of the Old or New Testament, and to emphasize practically those elements in the less perfect conception which are emphatically absent in the highest.

So it comes that the man who is impelled to think for himself finds that the religion offered to him suffers from two great defects : it is an external thing, and its Object is lower than the best he knows. The corporate unfaithfulness of the past and present thrusts upon him an un-

believable God, and with the tremendous suggestion of social tradition tells him that this is the only belief and the only way to believe ; and in the reaction of his soul against this we have the second great cause of modern unbelief.

The unbelief and unsureness of belief so common to-day can thus be seen in definite and not altogether unhopeful relation to the development of religion in the world, for though it is in part due to our individual unfaithfulness, it is also in part a protest against a wrong social tradition of God, and is therefore a step towards a truer belief.

Our present purpose then is to answer the question with which this essay began by suggesting that the state it speaks of is exceptional, and that there are reasons for it, while, on the other hand, generally to men of all ages and places, the implications of selfhood have become explicit in surely held religious beliefs. For this purpose we need only recall certain facts that are now the common property of the study of religion.

No tribe or people has anywhere been discovered without something that has no name but religion. Travellers have sometimes reported religionless tribes, but better acquaintance has shown them wrong. Religion is more definitely characteristic of man than is language or laughter or the use of tools.

This, in itself, suggests that religion is an activity necessary to the human mind. In its early stages religion is not missionary, and there-

fore it either began spontaneously in different places when man reached a certain level of development or it was reached by one stock and gave them, or was concomitant with, such advantage as enabled them to survive to the extinction of all the rest.

And despite endless variety in form, the essence of this common religion is a belief that the controlling power in man's world has thought and will, and that man can get into intercourse with this power ; and this is roughly what we have seen to be implied in all true human action.

We may go on to say, but not with quite such generality, that man finds in his religion that which helps him to be himself, to confidence in act and a steady outlook on life. It saves him from panic in the face of life's uncertainties. There are doubtless cases in which belief in evil spirits seems to add to life's unpleasant uncertainties, but it is probable that we have here an element of the degeneration described above, and, in any case, considering the vast uncertainty of the savage's life, the belief that he can propitiate the demon from whom life's evils come is the next best to trust in a good God.

The world's religion shows a remarkable similarity of development in different quarters, again suggesting that it is something native to the very constitution of humanity. This movement shows three distinguishable but interrelated aspects :—

(*a*) From a belief in many gods to a belief

in one God. This tendency is multiform. We have the many gods gathered under one supreme God, as in the Norse or Greek pantheons, or under a triad of intimately united gods, as in Egypt and India. And we have the conviction arising that the many gods are appearances of the One. We have, in Israel, first a God corresponding to the gods of the surrounding nations, then as king of all the gods, and lastly, as the only God. This process, in one form or other, may be found in the religion of all progressive peoples, and is an aspect of the mind's bent for the unification of its experience, by which we feel compelled to think of all being as forming one universe.

(*b*) Towards belief in the goodness of the deity. At first, unconsciously no doubt, the suppressions of impulse that would prejudice the common good were given religious sanction in the sex and blood taboos. At a later stage religion becomes the conscious centre of tribal and national life, and the essential concomitant of patriotism, which may be reckoned as the highest form of instinctive altruism. Very commonly the God is thought of as lawgiver and the vindicator of His law. More and more the attribution to God of any passion or unfairness becomes intolerable and He comes to be thought of as wholly and perfectly good. The necessity of man's highest nature has gradually stripped the thought of God of all the crudities and immoralities of its early forms until it stands pure and bright, the underlying

moral reality of the world known best when man dares to be himself.

(*c*) From a tribal or national to a universal God. At a certain stage each tribe or nation has its God, which is the centre of the tribal or national life. At this stage the tribe or nation rather than the individual is the worshipper: for mankind is here on a level of undeveloped personality and moral thought at which it was deemed just to punish a man for what his kinsman had done, the individual being but a limb of the communal body. But man grows beyond this stage: personality develops and demands a God with whom personal relations are possible. But, as we have just seen, the inward unification of experience, of which personality consists, must have as its counterpart belief in one God of all the world. So that at this juncture we have universal religions springing out of the national under the leadership of great personalities, as Zoroastrianism, Buddhism, Christianity, Islam.

And we can follow the development of religion in the world one step further, for if we allow these universal, ethical, personal religions to be an advance upon what preceded them, the criteria of that judgment will also enable us to compare them one with another. And here is little difficulty, for the religious development of the world leaves us to-day with only three universal religions, Buddhism, Christianity and Islam. There have been many other religions and cults that have transcended national limits, such as

Zoroastrianism, Manicheism, Mithraism and other cults of the Roman Empire, but they have lacked the power of surviving, which indicates a comparative lack of ability to interpret and enhance the inward faith of mankind. Judaism has survived marvellously, but only as a national religion, which since it repudiated Christianity has not shown itself capable of extension beyond the nation of its origin.

Of the three surviving supernational religions, Islam retains most of the narrower preceding type in the importance it gives to its holy place, Mecca. Nor can we point to any particular in which it has enriched the religious thought of mankind. It was a republication of Jewish monotheism and iconoclasm in a propaganda sustained by late Jewish eschatological ideas of resurrection, judgment and predestination. Its success was conditioned by the degeneracy of Christianity in the east, and for a time it gave the world what was probably a more rational religion and a higher kind of life than was then prevalent anywhere in Christendom. But it has since shown itself unable to spread amongst the most civilized peoples or to promote permanent progress amongst any. The reason is probably to be found in the external nature of the God it worships, as reflected in the external nature of its religious authority, a book given word for word from heaven to Mohammed, stereotyping the divine will for man in detail and for all time.

In comparing Buddhism with Christianity it

does not help to point to the degradation of modern Buddhism in certain places, for there were times when in certain places Christianity showed little if any better ; nor to compare the character of Gautama and Jesus, for the life of both was recorded by those who believed them perfect. But it should be remembered that originally Buddhism was not a religion, but a discipline or way of so managing one's thoughts and acts as to escape suffering. The Buddha did not deny the Gods, but ignored them : they were themselves transient and could not help : prayer to them was useless. The only point in his system resembling religious belief was the doctrine of Karma, the law that bound suffering to desire, its chief article being that re-incarnation denied the escape of death to man and threw him back entirely upon himself for delivery from suffering. His way of deliverance rested upon the assumption of the impermanence and illusory nature of the self, which was but a bundle of elements held together in painful conjunction by desire, and the only escape was to kill desire and allow the self to dissolve. His teaching is thus a remarkable converse confirmation of what we have seen to be the nature of religious faith. The India of the Buddha's day could not give him an idea of God's goodness great and intense enough to overcome evil with good, and so supply a rational basis for the pursuit of truly personal values in the world as it is, and therefore his remorseless logic led him, since he found no sufficient moral, personal

centre in the universe, to deny the essential oneness of human personality and to seek peace in its dissolution.

Buddhism, as a way of life, was an advance upon the religion of its day. For it freed the spirit of man from a religion that could not help. It was a consistent destroyer of all the lower and coarser forms of selfishness, and the beautiful inconsistency of Gautama, who, when perfect peace was within his grasp, withheld himself from it by his desire to help others, tended to mitigate the spiritual individualism that by the irony of logic was an essential part of his system. Its purest success was not as a religion, but as an intellectual and practical alternative to an insufficient religion.

When it became a religion it forsook its original base: Gautama, the Buddha, became the object of worship, and took the place that God takes in other religions. It may be retorted that Christianity also has given Jesus a place in worship that he did not give himself, but at least it has done this only as it conceives him related to and revealing the God who was all in all to him, whereas the modern Buddhist makes a god of him to whom all gods were useless, and prays to him who had no place for prayer.

We are left to see the world's religious development culminating in the religion of Jesus. In his thought of God all that is implied in the possession and highest activity of personality becomes most surely and clearly explicit, and

therefore of greatest avail to us. Nor must we think that the process so culminating was an easy one, or one merely of intellectual adjustment. Every step was fought for and paid for in the dearest coin of life ; and the highest reaches were the hardest and costliest, bequeathing to us the most sacred and valuable heritage of the race. For however hard we may find it, when we look only upon ourselves, to venture into conscious and explicit faith upon what in our best moments the depth of our being declares, yet when we consider Jesus we find it harder still to believe that his life was founded on untruth, and that his teaching of God was not the unfolding of the truth of his life, and therefore of all life ; and so he gives us God and ourselves.

IV

THE PRONOUNCEMENTS OF PERSONALITY

(4) OUR APPREHENSION OF GOD

In some sense all men, good and evil, have faith in God. Unless the evil man sees the possibility of a higher than the selfish standpoint and recognizes its truth he is not to blame for being as he is. And the man who, though he tells himself he cannot believe in God, yet does the best he knows, distinguishes good from evil by recognizing in it a universal quality, a loyalty to the truth of things, a relation to the realities of life, that is an implied judgment upon what that reality is, and his act proclaims what his conscious thought is shy to confess.

All life's best depends upon man's acting in this fundamental but often unconscious faith, and the only way to increase its range and efficiency for life is to understand it and bring it into conscious use. But this endeavour labours under the difficulty that the relationship of man to God is necessarily unique, and since our words are drawn from common relationships they are always likely to mislead us here. To speak of "knowing" God suggests observable facts and

their logical deductions, and is apt to make us think of God as under the necessity of making good His credentials in the vestibule of our mind before we admit Him to our confidence ; whereas how should we know what speaks rightly of God unless He was in our very endeavour after truth? Unless there is something of God in us, we shall have nothing by which to recognize Him when He is brought to us. And if there is something of God in us, something that is a criterion of truth for us, our sureness of it must clearly be of a different sort to our sureness of the knowledge to which it helps us. So that when we speak of knowing God in the deepest sense, we are using the word in a unique way, essentially different from the sense in which we apply it to so much of our religious knowledge as depends upon facts and inference.

So, too, the word " belief " often betrays God, and that in two ways. It is often used for knowledge of inferior certainty : we cannot prove that a man is guilty, but we believe it. This sort of belief plays a large part in practical life, for we have often to act upon data insufficient for certainty, and it thus bears a spurious and dangerous analogy to the essential religious faith, with the result that, on the one hand, the sureness of the latter is libelled, and on the other hand many unsure things are labelled with its sureness. And from this confusion has come the endeavour to explain religious belief as knowledge of what is highly probable but not certain,

whereas we have seen that it is essentially belief in things in which we cannot but believe.

Another notion of belief is that under social suggestion, at the bidding of Church or priest or preacher or book, we should give the psychical concomitants of sureness to some statement or statements which would not otherwise win conviction of their verity. We used to be told, "Only believe," as if belief was a fruit grown on some authoritative tree and we had only to stretch out our hands and pluck it. Here again language plays tricks, for in common life we rightly believe many things on authority, i.e., things that we have reason to believe the authorities are in position to know better than we. But there are certain regions of experience where we can admit no external authority. If I am in pain, or happy, or exerting myself, I cannot admit any authority whatever to contradict it. No authority can modify my self-knowledge as to whether I have acted from selfish motives or truly. And since the primal act of faith is in acting from a point of view in which self is subservient or forgotten, it concerns a region where no external authority has jurisdiction. This faith is a direct experience of God in us that becomes the criterion of every external authority. So far as it is useful, what is called external authority in religion is the accumulated and sorted experience of men in the explication of what is implied in this primal faith, and its office is to stimulate and evoke and to save us from random experimentation.

But whatever any external religious authority presents to us must always abide the recognition of the internal.

When we attempt to receive the essentials of religion merely on external authority, we are committing a far greater wrong against true faith than in the most aggressive unbelief. For the primal act of faith is, as we saw, the soul's confidence in its own unity implying the soulfulness of the universe. Now a statement is believed in the right way when it becomes an integral part of our intelligible experience, making it more intelligible either in extent or in intensity. A statement of external fact may be accepted on authority, provided we are inwardly satisfied with the authority, but to take on authority a statement that touches the inwardness of our personality is to take it for other reasons than that it contributes to the unification and intelligibility of our experience, and is an act of treachery to the soul. It introduces a mass of foreign and indigestible matter into the organism of our personality. It is the most fatal form of drug habit in which the soul can indulge.

The recognition of the oneness of faith in its deepest sense with the intellectual and moral necessity of the soul for inward unification shows very clearly the necessity for proceeding beyond the primal, implied faith to something more explicit. For this procedure has to be defended against the suggestion that it may be best to leave the divine element of human life where we

first find it in naïve, unrecognized implication in all good activity; to which it must be answered that we cannot do so, for the human mind will submit all its experience to a process of elaboration, and will attempt to bring these experiences into relation with the rest of its experience: this will be done in any case, if not rightly, then wrongly. To take a concrete case, the man who gives himself to an unselfish impulse is bound in review to ask: How can an unselfish impulse be brought into intelligible connection with the many selfconcerned impulses to which I have given play? How can satisfaction in the unselfish act be regarded as rational? To doubt the possibility of seeing its rationality is to imperil its repetition. To say that it is really done for the feeling of self-satisfaction that follows only opens the further question as to why the self should be satisfied with an action that ignored its interests. To say that we find satisfaction in the praise of those for whom the act is done either proffers vainglory and selfrighteous complaisance as the future motive or destroys the motive power of the praise and so prevents repetition. When once a man begins to think about his conduct there seems no way of bringing this best and characteristically human part of life into intelligible relation with the rest, and so of preserving it from perversion or extinction, but by accepting its discovery of a universal will, fellowship with which alone allows man those activities that put him into possession of per-

sonality, and is therefore his highest good. Thus in these experiences he finds the dominant principle for making his life one and whole.

The second step of faith then is to recognize the God implied in all our highest activities, and to give what is implied an expression that accords with the experiences concerned. The test as to whether the second step has been rightly taken is whether it helps to lift life permanently above the individual and self-concerned standpoint, i.e., whether the explanation is true to the thing explained. This is not pragmatism, which tests truth by interests other than itself, for though we are testing the truth of an account of an experience by its power to enlarge and deepen that experience, that experience itself is an experience of truth. This second step in belief is not properly belief at all in the strictest sense, but is the rational elaboration of the primal faith involved in all good human activity. It is comparable to scientific theorizing based on facts and subject to confirmation, with this important difference, that here the facts themselves are essentially pronouncements needing only to be made explicit. It is therefore not so much theorizing as interpretation : it is the interpretation of a unique sort of experience in such terms as will enable us to see it in relation to, and bring it into working relation with, the rest of our experience.

When we turn to ask whether religious belief gives us what is really reliable, we shall see that it is impossible to question the validity of

what is implied in the primal act of faith, though any particular interpretation depends upon the validity of the processes of reason used, except so far as it is confirmed by being found vital to an extension of the original experience.

I cannot say "I doubt" without proclaiming my faith in the right to say "I" and to have a criterion of truth. The use of the first personal pronoun is a claim to be a system of experience whose inward cohesion and centralism stand in correspondence to the inward cohesion and centralism of the universe. Of our selfhood with its inward oneness and selfdetermination and of the universal element in all the self's true activities we may be absolutely sure. It is possible, of course, to question all these in the abstract, but to act is always to affirm them. A man may argue against the possibility of moral freedom and may prove to himself that all a man's acts are predetermined, but when it comes to action he chooses and determines, he accepts and attributes moral responsibility. And with regard to the universal element with which we are here chiefly concerned, we are absolutely sure that the sanest and most truly human activity is to act above the level of self-concern, and that in so acting we are not abandoning our selfhood, but rather that our selfdetermination and the realization of our own personality are bound up with loyalty to this universal standpoint. Of the being of this universal element we are as sure as of our own being: the two stand or fall together, and if

they fall we revert to being things with no right to say "I" at all. For man's idea of self is just the other side of his idea of the universe, and the supremacy of mind and right in the one involves their supremacy in the other.

It will now appear that these steps in explication go only a very little beyond the fundamental assurance. For the activity of thought, or feeling, or will, that is above the level of selfconcern, and so makes us selves is activity prosecuted as though in it we had fellowship with a universal Mind, and Heart, and Will: this is the natural suggestion that finds general expression in the world's religion. And when we ask what can build a rational bridge between selfinterest and the common good, and make it reasonable for a self to be self-forgetful, the only reply seems to be that the very possession of selfhood in a world of things depends upon the existence of something analogous to a self at the heart of the universe, in fellowship with which man may escape from thinghood to selfhood, so that fellowship with the universal Self is the first interest and life-condition of the human self. Therefore, with an assurance scarcely less than that with which we recognize the universal element in our being, we interpret it as fellowship and co-operation with a universal Mind and Heart and Will, whose quality is known to us in the human activities in which His presence is recognized, i.e., in the beautiful and true and good. Our apprehension of God comes to us with and in what we are surest of in ourselves,

and self is the one bit of being that we know at first hand, from within.

Beyond this, where thinking becomes less and less interpretation of the pronouncements of the spirit within us and becomes more and more theoretical, we must tread very cautiously, for we are getting away from the region of direct experience into one where words too easily dominate and betray experience, and where creed is likely to become a substitute for life. Extension of religious thought must go hand in hand with extension of religious experience, but this need not limit our horizon, for where our religious experience is most vivid, as it is at the instance of Jesus Christ, we find ourselves most sure that it is only a beginning.

V

THE PERSONALITY OF GOD

In the last essay the universal in human life was spoken of in terms that naturally suggested a personal God, but it is necessary to look into this point, for it has been much questioned and is of great importance.

Religion generally expresses itself as belief in a personal God and finds its natural development in personal relations with Him, such as prayer and obedience and trust. There are exceptions ; the pantheist professes an impersonal God. But in religion (as distinct from philosophy) individual pantheism appears to be a phenomenon of reaction against obscurantism in the religion of a personal God ; and where it obtains more extensively, as in Indian pantheism, we find a withdrawal from activity and a depreciation of personality which gives converse confirmation to our findings, as also does the inability of pantheistic philosophies to find a place for personal values. And we note in religious systems professedly pantheistic a strong tendency in actual worship to personify the object of worship.

To-day, however, there is a widespread

suspicion that to think of God as personal is to belittle Him and that the thought is the product of man's conceit of his own importance. And there has been much in the religion of a personal God that deserves these suspicions. Men have attributed favouritism and arbitrariness and other human weaknesses to God. A great part of personal and national religion has been the belief that God cares more for one particular individual and nation than for the rest. And when we try to cleanse our minds of this folly and to do justice to the immensity of nature and its apparent aloofness from human interest, we are apt to feel that an adequate appreciation of God's greatness makes it difficult for us to think of Him as personal; and this has popularized an indefinite pantheism.

The popularity of this reaction against the belief in a personal God is very largely due to its indefiniteness, for, as soon as we try to be definite about it, its attractiveness vanishes. The alternatives to belief in a personal God are two, belief that the fundamental reality of the universe is not spirit and belief that it is impersonal spirit.

The former would include materialism (which has never posed as a religion and as a philosophy is obsolescent, so need not detain us here), and also pantheism proper, to which God is the sum of all that is, equally present in all things, the reality of which spirit and matter are both only appearances and in neither of which is He better known than in the other.

It is difficult to see how a thorough-going pantheism can contribute to the greatness of our thought of God. As a mere machine the human brain is more wonderful than a whole heaven of stars; and we have to add the incalculably greater wonder of the mind that rides the machine. That which knows is greater, more wonderful, more worshipful than that which does not know. If God does not know then I am greater than He; but if He does know, how can we obviate the inference that He is better known in that which knows than in that which does not know? And if we grant this the pantheism which sees Him equally in all loses its ground.

And if God is equally known in everything, then evil shows Him no less than good—and the pantheist, generally at least, proclaims Him to be above this difference. But a being for whom this difference is not vital must, by all that we know of high and low, be not above it but below it. And so God becomes, not wonderful and worshipful, but simply indifferent, an omnipresent neutrality. And then again, evil is essentially a disorderly, disruptive, disintegrating factor, while the necessity of thought is to think of all being as a universe, i.e., as a systematic whole, and if we think of God as the ultimate principle of unity in it, then we cannot but think of Him as an ordered being, centralized, coherent, and therefore essentially better known in the good than in the evil. The pantheistic God tends to become a being

so equally distributed that one may as well leave Him out of count.

The difficulties of strict pantheism as a religion are apparently felt by those who seek to escape both them and what seem the difficulties of belief in a personal God by professing belief in a God who is spirit but not personal spirit. But what is meant by impersonal spirit? Can a being who neither thinks, nor knows, nor wills be with any fitness called spirit? And how can there be thought, or knowledge, or will except in and by that inward order and unification which is personality?

The personality of God has often been thought of crudely and in connection with anthropomorphism, sometimes of an objectionable kind, though there was a solid contribution to humanity in the anthropomorphic art of Greece. But the attribution of personality to God is the reverse of anthropomorphism. For the very essence of personality is a man's apprehension of himself as in touch with something that lifts him above selfpreference, and pride, and individual interests: it is just this universal quality that stamps all the highest and specific activities of personality. And it is through this highest and most universal element in his being that he would seek to know God. So that the attribution of personality to God is not man's attempt to impose his own form on the Eternal but rather the resolution to know God through that element of his being which alone yields him escape from selfbiased thought.

It is an attempt not to make God in the likeness of man, but to be remade by what in man is likest God.

The fear that we shall belittle God by thinking of Him as personal is not confirmed by history. Rather, the only result of refraining from doing so is to belittle life and leave us without any colours for greatness at all. The religion of an impersonal God has yet to produce anything remotely approaching in grandeur the expression of the religion most resolute for His personality: "Sublimity," says Coleridge, "is Hebrew by birth."

A difficulty in thinking of God as personal is often found in the assertion that personality implies limitation. "I know myself," it is said, "only by contrast to what is not myself." Lotze (*Microcosmus,* Eng. trans., II, 678 ff.) showed that the fundamental thing was not consciousness of limit but of the self, which in our case happened to be limited. And if, as we have seen, we have personality wherever we have ordered, centralized experience, it will appear that there is no special incongruity between infinity and personality. It is no doubt difficult to imagine an infinite person, but it is as difficult to imagine an infinite being of any sort.

And in the next essay we shall see that, in view of things done in the world that are not God's will and of other considerations, we are compelled to think of God as working under limitations, and these are sufficient to provide

the divine Self with the necessary limits, if we still think limits essential to personality.

Probably the real difficulty in thinking of God as personal is due to an inadequate conception and experience of personality. For the difficulty diminishes in proportion to the height of the type of personality in our thought. When we see what personality truly means in Jesus Christ, that it is essentially unselfish and universal, and that it bears qualities before which all other values in the world are insignificant and all other powers unkingly, we see that unless God has these things then He is not of all most worshipful.

We need, of course, to be careful lest in thinking of God as personal we transfer to Him all that we find incidental to personality in ourselves. We cannot think of Him as sundered from our personality as we from each other. The very nature of our primal experience of Him is of a co-operation and inworking more intimate than is possible with our nearest fellow. And this relationship to Him is essential to our personality in a way that no other single person is, despite the great part played by other personalities in the growth of our own, and is indeed the necessary condition of all wholesome fellowship with our fellows.

VI

THE LIMITATIONS OF GOD

THE problem before us appears most obviously in the well-known dilemma that, in view of the pain, injustice and evil in the world, God must be thought of either as not almighty or not good ; and it can hardly be said that representative Christian thought has fairly faced it.

An attempt is sometimes made to meet the difficulty by asserting that when we see the end we shall find all to have been good. But this begs the question, for the part of evil that we call moral evil is just that which we are sure does not produce good : if we were sure it would produce good in the future, it would cease to be evil for us now. So that this suggestion saves the goodness of God by obliterating the distinction between good and evil. And, even so, it does not escape the imputation of limits to God. For it introduces the idea of purpose, and a purpose is an end sought through a series of steps because it cannot be had otherwise ; so that it has been rightly recognized that to attribute purpose of any sort to God is to think of Him as working under limits in which He cannot have at once

what He wants. And in the present case it compels us to do so or to deny the goodness of God; for if the good end could have been had immediately without the intermediate process laden with pain and evil, it would have been wicked not to do so.

The thought of a purpose of God is one of the most deeply rooted in religion and one of the most necessary. For to think of the time process as purposeless so far as God is concerned is to annihilate all possibility of conscious co-operation of human and divine activity. So that all active fellowship of God and man demands the attribution of at least such limits to God as allow us to think of Him as having a purpose in the world process.

The same result comes more directly and forcibly in our consciousness of moral freedom and the possession of personality that goes with it. The limitation of God is given here directly by the very activity in which we find Him most surely. For we are never so sure of the universal element in us, and therefore of God, as in recognizing the distinction between right and wrong, a distinction that always involves the possibility of both (since the inevitable would not be morally wrong) and the sureness that one possibility, if realized, would be the opposite of what God wills. Does not a man's fight against injustice in the world find its base, not merely in the assured judgement that this thing is unjust, but in the reinforcing conviction that this has not been and is not what God wills?

Is not the sense of sin the sureness that we have opposed God's will and limited His activity in our lives? In so far as we are right in thinking that we stand in moral and personal relationships to God, i.e., in so far as we are really persons, it must be because our acts are ours in some sense in which they are not His. Personal and moral fellowship is possible only with those over whom our power is limited. Unless, so far as we are concerned, God is so limited as to allow us real possession of ourselves and real responsibility and initiative in our acts, then our moral and personal life is on a plain of unreality where it can have no commerce at all with God.

And these things find common expression in our religious language. To pray, "Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven," is meaningless if God is already King and if His will is always done on earth. The word "commandment," as applied to His will, speaks of other wills that are appealed to but not compelled by the divine will. In fact, God's will can have no meaning or reference to our activity except as it refers to things not yet done and possibly not done at all; otherwise our relation to God's will can only be a passive resignation to what is, and we are reduced to the hopeless confusion of trying to think that our ill deeds, because they were, were God's will.

Thinkers have often shrunk from thinking of God as limited, but wherever this reluctance has

been brought into contact with experience the result discredits it even in the greatest thinkers. St. Paul, for instance, shared with many of his age a belief in the unlimited nature of God's power with its corollary that man is morally predetermined, but where he brings this tenet into direct touch with man's moral life his argument is reversed by the figure he uses. "Hath not the potter a right over the clay, from the same lump to make one part a vessel unto honour, and another unto dishonour?" (Rom. ix. 21). Precisely, but only in so far as he has no one but himself to blame for the dishonour of the second lump. And since, in dealing with his own moral life, Paul never seeks to escape the burden of responsibility by an appeal to God's unlimited power, we must suppose that his doctrine of the latter belonged rather to the traditional theology of his day than to the experience by which he made a living contribution to Christian thought.

We find then that the limitation of God's power is taken for granted in actual religion, especially in its most important practical issues. It has surely been a lack of faith in the good faith of God that has withheld Christian thought from exploring the region upon which this door opens. And it leads far; for when once we see limits set to the power of God we see limits to His prevision also.

Predetermination and foreknowledge go together: events can be foreknown only as far as they are predetermined. So man foretells the

mechanically predetermined astronomical events. But just in so far as we have moral freedom God cannot be thought of as foreknowing our acts and destiny. He may, of course, know the alternatives before us and their consequences, but if there ever are real moral alternatives before us (and unless there are we are not morally responsible), then not even God knows which we shall take. For if God knows assuredly that we shall take the one, then we *cannot* take the other, and there is no real choice. If God knows for certain that we shall yield to a temptation, then it is impossible for us to be successful in resisting, and temptation becomes compulsion. So that unless there is a limit to God's foreknowledge, especially as concerns our choices of right and wrong, there is no possibility of moral or personal relationships with Him, for unlimited foreknowledge in Him would disprove all on which our moral personality depends.

And this conclusion is very often expressed and implied in practical religion, especially when it deals with our personal relations to God. For instance, is it possible to think of a good Being as commanding that which He foresees with absolute sureness will not be done? For if it is quite certain that it will not be done, then the doing of it is impossible to those to whom the command is issued. Or to think of God's will as it comes to us in our recognition of having transgressed it, if I must say that God foresaw before I had any being that I would do this wrong thing, then I could do nothing

else, for if of two conceivable events we are absolutely certain that one will happen and not the other, it implies that the latter is impossible, and so I am rid of responsibility. Whereas there is rather in all true penitence a sense of having disappointed God.

It is true that in the Biblical record of the Hebrew religious consciousness the foreknowledge of God is sometimes emphasized, but seldom without the suggestion of predetermination also. In Isaiah xlvi. 10 we have God "declaring the end from the beginning," but this is because, "My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure." And in the writings of St. Paul foreknowledge is regularly linked to predestination.

But where the thought deals with personal relationships between God and man the foreknowledge of God is quite simply denied. "Wherefore, when I looked that it should bring forth grapes, brought it forth wild grapes? . . . . He looked for judgment but behold oppression; for righteousness, but behold a cry" (Isa. v. 4 and 7). "They will reverence my son" (Mark xii. 6). "There is joy in heaven over one sinner that repenteth" (Luke xv. 7)—but if it was known he would repent before he even sinned there would be no occasion for special joy at the occurrence of the inevitable. And with these we may put Paul's citation (Rom. x. 21), "All the day long did I spread out my hands unto a disobedient and gainsaying people," for we cannot

suppose he thought that God was sure that these people could not be other than they proved, for then the outspread hands would only be a rhetorical gesture flinging upon Israel the evil to which God's will had pre-destined them.

And here, too, the whole relation of God to the world is involved. If He knows perfectly everything that is to be, why all the pother and agony of the process that can only bring Him stale news. One feels the force of what Mr. Locker-Lampson reports in *My Confidences* as gravely uttered by his friend, Mr. Gibbs, "I wonder what the Almighty does with Himself: how He gets through His day. It must all seem so flat: He can have no pleasant surprises."

It will appear by this time that the thought of God's limitation carries us far and has important practical consequences for our religion: to these we must return later, but in the meanwhile we have to ask, If God is to be thought of as working under limitations, what are we to think of their source? Are we to think of Him merely as the greatest of finite spirits, and behind Him, other than He, the great Veiled Being, the Unknown Ultimate Reality? However attractive and romantic such a Promethean figure may be, it is not only insufficient for religion in certain of its most marked and necessary conscious aspects, but is radically inadequate as the object of that primal act of faith which we have seen to be the root of all

religion. The declaration of rights of the spirit within us is the beginning of any sort of belief in a God who is spirit, and the whole sense and worth of this declaration lies in the indubitable assurance that the spirit ought to be supreme in us, a declaration which involves, and depends upon, and commits us to, the assertion that spirit is supreme in the universe from which we draw our being; otherwise the claim of spirit to be supreme in us is without any ground in reality and our ancestry invalidates it. So that the God implied in our claim to personality is the Spirit that dominates the universe, and if, in the ultimate reality in and from which we have our being spirit is not dominant, then it has no right to be so in us.

We are thus bound to think of God as supreme and yet limited. This seems a paradox, yet both are clearly given where we are surest of God. For when facing some evil in ourselves we say, "This is not God's will," we are certainly thinking of God as standing for the whole meaning and purpose of the universe, and yet over against this conviction is another, that this evil thing is here not by His will but by something that contravenes and limits it. And the only tolerable solution comes as a direct suggestion from this very situation, and is hardly more than a translation of it into language. With and in the consciousness that we are in some degree responsible for our acts, and therefore in some respect their authors, comes also the apprehension of the

universal nature of right, that it expresses all that is true to us of ourselves and the universe, and is the discovery of a Will at the heart of things and of this Will as good and supreme. And the first and greatest incidence of this World-Will on us is that we should recognize and freely will the right: the Will that is supreme in the universe wills that we should will. But the knowledge of right and the possibility of our being autonomous enough freely to choose the right depends upon the existence of the possible alternative of wrong, which, if realized, is a contravention and limitation of the divine Will. If, therefore, God wills us to will the right, He, in the same determination, wills such limitation of His own power as makes it possible for our acts to be our own, even at the cost of our power to disobey and thwart His will. The limitation of God thus is given as self-limitation.

We shall see later how these conclusions help to clear difficulties of religious thought. Here we need only note that the thought of God's limitation, far from dishonouring Him or making Him less worshipful, allows us to find in Him certain qualities that cannot exist apart from limitation, and particularly from self-limitation, and that these are the very qualities without which He is not morally supreme and truly worshipful. It is indeed probable that our chariness to admit limitation in God is at bottom a faithless suspicion that there is something fanciful in attributing to Him the sort of good-

ness that takes our most unfeigned admiration and love.

We speak, for instance, of God as love, but if God knows no limits He cannot suffer, and if He cannot suffer His love is an unmeaning word to us who suffer and sin; for the love that does not suffer with the suffering of the loved, and still more at the sinning of the loved, is a counterfeit the more hateful for its high denomination.

Unselfishness is a slippery term to argue with, but it represents in common assurance a quality without which no man wins our loyalty; and selfishness is the most readily understood identification of the spirit that opposes the common good. But if God is unlimited He can know nothing of the difference between these two terms: an absolutely infinite being cannot have any experience of unselfishness or self-sacrifice, for He will lack nothing He wants, and will therefore lack what to us is an essential element of goodness. But if God is self-limited, then by the act that gave us wills, He led us along the road to which He calls us, and pays in His leading a greater price of conflict and pain than the following demands even from His greatest heroes.

VII

GOD AND THE WORLD

THE last essay considered the relation of God to man mainly so far as it concerned only our moral personality, but it is impossible to avoid going further and asking how we are to think of God as related to man's universe. We saw, indeed, that we have to think of God as Spirit dominating the whole, but this is vague, and although pursuit of definiteness will bring us into a region of speculation far from the primal certainties of faith, the attempt must be made, for if thought does not fill in the outline, tradition will.

The attempt is to bring together our ordered experience of the universe and our experience of God. The real difficulty is not that religion is antagonistic to science, but has been too anxious to find external support in it, so that the science of one age generally finds religion wedded to the science of an older time. But every age is under the necessity of bringing its science and religion together, and real progress ought to be effected just so far as both know themselves and their bases.

Now we have apprehended a purpose in the

world that appeals to our wills in such a way as to persuade us that the production of beings with such wills as ours lay in the aim of the world-purpose ; and we have concluded that our possession of these wills is grounded in the selflimitation of the Universal Will. But if the highest product of the world-process involves God's limiting of Himself in a peculiar sense, it seems probable that we shall also have to think of Him as working under limits in the process that so culminated, and this is confirmed by the consideration that purpose presupposes limitation. And therefore creation by an evolutionary process, which is essentially and obviously a working under limits, agrees better with what is implied in our moral freedom and the dignity of personality than does creation by a series of divine fiats.

And we may substantiate this position by asking why, if humanity was a direct and special creation, did God degrade and impede us by so large an admixture of the brute. If He deliberately put that in us, how can His ideal of us be any different? But if we understand that in evolution God is working under limitations and could not bring man to being otherwise, then, in His yet unaccomplished intent, we find our dignity and know Him as our ally in the struggle of the spirit in us to outgrow and dominate the brute.

And if the evolutionary process represents the limits under which God must work we are helped with the problem created by the pain involved

in the struggle for survival. If it is impossible for God to give life on any other terms (and it seems in the nature of things impossible to have life and the possibility of joy without a concomitant possibility of pain), then we have only to reckon with the question as to whether on the whole it was worth while. And if in answering the question we may leave human life out of count, as introducing values incommensurable with pain and pleasure, and may confine ourselves to subhuman life, there can be little doubt that the overplus of enjoyable life is considerable. Observation shows that for all life below the higher vertebrates there is comparatively little pain, quite serious injuries being insufficient to destroy appetite for food. Naturalists tell us that in wild life disease is unknown. Life here is short and risky, but full to the skin of the joy of perfect health that civilized man seldom knows. The very stringency of the struggle for survival contributes to the healthy and therefore enjoyable quality of the surviving life.

The acknowledgement of an intrinsic value in subhuman life brings the evolutionary process into analogy with creative art, in which, though the artist's purpose moves on to a completion, each part has a value of its own. And we need this consideration in contemplating the ages that preceded man.

Probably much of what has just been said of the subhuman stage was true of the long ages of prehistoric man. His life was probably

in many respects like that of a healthy child. Even to-day, with the probability that in many cases we have degeneracy rather than primitiveness, most savages laugh easily and much. And what to us are horrible customs are compatible at more primitive stages with very amiable traits, as for instance, neither the human sacrifices of the Mexicans nor the cannibalism of the Papuans prevented their great love for flowers.

But before we go on to consider the latest stage of evolution, we must revert to the earliest. It may be asked, Even if evolution is the process by which the world of life has its present form, what about the matter that evolves? Was not that a special creation?

This question is both more difficult and less urgent than it used to be. For we used to think we knew what matter was : we have found out that we do not. It used to be possible to think that God created atoms with immutable qualities and then left them to whirl into worlds. But now the atom has been anatomized, and what used to be called "dead matter" can hardly be described except in terms that belong to life, if not to thinking life. It is therefore wise to wait until we know for what we have to account before we attempt to account for it.

And it must be borne in mind that when we use the word "matter," as in this question, we are really speaking of a mental abstraction. "Matter," in this sense, is known only as an aspect of the whole moving process of the universe, and an aspect artificially isolated for

the convenience of speech and thought. To say that matter must be created before it can evolve is like saying that a note must be created before it can be sounded.

Perhaps we can help ourselves to answer what lies behind the question by taking another approach and asking what relation the so-called material universe bears to the self. We find that it sets limits to our thoughts and compels us to order them. It imposes upon us the necessity for the inward ordering and unification of our experience, which is the birth of our being as personalities. It puts limits to our wills : we cannot do what we like with it ; and just because we cannot do what we like with it, it provides us with reliable means of expressing ourselves and accomplishing our purposes, of getting into intelligible and effectual fellowship with other selves. It is the means by which we become ourselves and know ourselves, and also it is the vehicle by which the spirit of man expresses his oneness with his fellows and gives himself to them.

This suggests that what we call the material universe is God's means to selflimitation, His means of so limiting Himself as to give other personalities room to be and, in part at least, of imparting Himself to them. It is, perhaps, best to think of the material universe not merely as God's means to selflimitation but as one aspect of God selflimited, or rather as a region of God's being specialized in a certain way by the exercise of His selflimitation. This is only

another way of saying that God does not limit Himself by bringing into being something external alien to Himself (a meaningless thought) but by an inward movement, in the recession from each other of elements otherwise to be thought of as co-extensive, with the result that a stress is created under which the evolutionary process proceeds. This, of course, is merely figurative speech, but if we use spatial figures at all (and they are difficult to avoid), something of this sort is preferable to that which makes God and the material universe external to each other. And the danger of regarding the material universe as being of the substance of God (i.e., the danger of pantheism or materialism) passes when it is regarded as dependent upon His selflimitation, for this forbids us merely to equate Him with the universe so resulting.

And from this point of view one aspect of the difficulty of thinking of a beginning for the world and the time process is met. For if the material universe is God's way to selflimitation, and His means to the end He seeks in limiting Himself, then "matter" is as eternal as the activity of God's love.

And the thought that the material universe is an aspect of God as selflimited agrees with one of its marked qualities. Nature is said to be non-moral: Huxley found two opposite regions of experience, the non-moral physical universe and the inward moral life of man, and could not bring them to terms; and there is

undoubtedly in nature a seeming indifference to moral values. But in order to make it true that nature is non-moral, you have to take nature as only part of the Whole—there is something more to be taken into account. For if nature is all, then the moral life of man is part of her, and she is not non-moral ; and the only question is the respective significance of man's morality and nature's other aspects in determining her ultimate quality ; and, as we have seen, man's moral life is discredited unless it is allowed to interpret the universe. And at least it may be said that the moral life appears as the highest element in the highest organism that nature has produced, and the one along which man feels confident the true line of future evolution lies. On the other hand, if nature is non-moral then the righteousness of man witnesses that she is not all : there is something other in the constitution of things. The non-morality of nature thus appears to be the Ultimate Reality appearing in the material universe under limits which our spiritual nature perceives and sees through to the fuller Being behind.

And the non-morality of nature serves the ends of the spiritual life, at least so far as it concerns the fate of moral beings at her hands. We see a good man die young in horrible and humiliating suffering, while unctuous selfishness is glorified by euthanasia at ninety. And if we extend our view to social reactions, we find, over against a certain correspondence of virtue and prosperity, when we take people in the mass

and in the long run, marked social disapproval and penalties attached to some of the noblest and most valuable human qualities. Against the English proverb, "Honesty is the best policy," must be set the Spanish, "Renounce the devil and thou shalt wear a shabby coat." But if the world were without these alleged injustices then it would always obviously pay to do right, and righteousness would be reduced to prudent selfregard. There could be no such thing as heroism, or unselfishness, or selfsacrifice. So that the selflimitation of God, which in its activity makes these great things possible to Him, makes them possible to man by its results.

And along these lines we see also the meaning and need of the frequently deplored obscuration of God in the observable world. For if God had made Himself and His moral nature clear and indubitable in the external world, then to serve Him would always appear as the immediate dictate of selfpreference, and so we could not have fellowship with Him in the highest of our being or of His. God could give us an externally imparted sureness of Himself only on a basis which would have given a bias of selfconcern to all our dealings with Him, and thus made all inward fellowship with Him impossible. As it is, we attain faith in Him only with and in faith in our own highest nature, and to know Him is to venture experimentally upon the spiritual in ourselves, and so to have fellowship with Him in the highest of our life and activities.

VIII

MIRACLES

THE problem of the miraculous contains two quite distinct issues :—

(1) As to whether miracles in the common acceptation of the word really happen, and

(2) As to whether certain events, generally called miraculous, are to be thought of as having happened in the manner recorded in the Bible.

In the commonly accepted sense, a miracle is an irregularity in the order of nature that demands the explanation that it is a special act of the divine will. This presupposes that the order of nature is not the order of the divine mind, and that the laws of nature are not the working of the divine will ; or that the divine mind and will work through mutually estranged orders, one that of nature and the other to be recognized by its overriding of the natural order. And it also presupposes that we know the limits of the natural. It thus confuses our thought of God and exaggerates our knowledge of nature.

This common notion of miracle is a survival of the Jewish demand for a sign, which Jesus condemned, and it made good its hold on

Christendom as the base of medieval theology, in which the Church's divine deposit of revealed truth was held to have been attested and accredited by miracle. The system of thought that demands an external authority can get it only by putting God outside His world and then proving His activity by the scars and breakages of His re-entrance. It reverses the parable and makes the Shepherd accredit himself by climbing in some other way than the normal.

But to-day the whole notion has become unacceptable and even inconceivable. It either denies nature to God or imputes inconsistencies to Him, and is therefore as repugnant to religion as to science, while it creates unnecessary conflict between them. For what the scientist stipulates for in his conception of natural order is nothing but regularity of sequence—that, given the same antecedents, the same consequents will follow. And a perfectly wise mind and will would always, in exactly the same circumstances, do the same thing. So that the order of nature runs in precisely the same way as the consistency of God, and, if He has anything to do with nature at all, an act of His that was a breach of her order would be a breach of His own consistency.

It is sometimes said that if there were no miracles in the accepted sense, God would be a prisoner in His own universe. He would be so only in the sense that the thought of the thinker is imprisoned by the laws of reason. To ask for miracles is to ask for God to

contradict Himself. The one real miracle in the universe, the one breach in its order, the one experienced inconsequence, is sin. "Sin is lawlessness," and the fact that it breaks the order of the universe stamps it as evincing not the activity of God but the opposite.

But in repudiating the accepted notion of the miraculous we must be careful not to allow wrong inferences. To deny that God breaks the order of His universe is not to say that He is never active in it, but the very reverse—He is so unbrokenly active in it that its order is the order of His working. Nor does it imply that God is not more in one event than in another, only the criterion of the intensity of His presence is not the degree to which the event is an alien in the world, nor its lack of intelligible relations to its context, but rather the multiplicity and importance of them, and consequently the event's power to interpret the whole. The old idea of miracle supposes that our fullest and surest knowledge of God comes from events inserted by Him in an otherwise selfexplanatory universe: the view here taken is that God is best known in those events which are most potent to explain the world in which they happen. Nor must the view of miracles taken here make us think that there can be nothing new in the world, any more than that a speaker says nothing new because he breaks no rule of grammar and does not contradict himself. Nor does it debar the unique, but rather makes it possible in the only intelligible

sense ; for only in an ordered whole can the uniqueness of any part be significant, as the topstone of a pinnacle has a significant uniqueness in comparison with the rest which is not possessed, say, by a pebble which happens to be of a different shape to those surrounding it.

Bearing in mind then that, if we believe the universe to find its consistency in God, His activity can never show itself as a break in the order of nature, we must now turn to the consideration of such Bible narratives as are usually called miraculous, and it will be convenient and sufficient to confine consideration to those of the four Gospels.

It may be noted here that in the Authorized Version of the New Testament the word "miracle" is used to translate two Greek words, one meaning a "deed of power," and the other a "sign." The latter alone represents the usually accepted conception of a "miracle," and in the first three Gospels the demand for it is condemned by Jesus (Matt. xvi. 4 ; Mark viii. 11–12 ; Luke xi. 29–30). In the Fourth Gospel he uses his works of healing regularly as "signs," and this constitutes one of the chief difficulties in accepting the whole of it as the work of an eyewitness.

The great majority of the Gospel miracles fall under one of two heads, (1) the casting out of demons, and (2) the healing of diseases.

We need not here discuss the nature of what was believed to be possession by demons, though we may note that Jesus was never said to be

confronted with any other form of mental trouble. Given belief in demons and in their power to possess man, the phenomena would follow in certain mental cases, and also the possibility of cure by exorcism. Cases of demon-possession and exorcism, very like the gospel stories, are to be found in the history of mission work in India and China. They may possibly both in symptom and cure be explained by the power of suggestion in certain sorts of mental and nervous abnormality: in the case of the Gadarene, it seems that Jesus permitted the stampeding of the swine as the only means of suggestion forcible enough for the case, since simple command had not proved effective (Mark v. 8). But, whatever the explanation, there is nothing incredible in the narratives so far as they claim to report what was observed.

It is important to note the great number of cases under this head as compared with other ailments, which indicates a general susceptibility to suggestion; and there are indications that Jesus regarded them as the normal material for his and his disciples' healing work (Luke xi. 20; Matt. xii. 28; Mark i. 39, iii. 15, vi. 7; Luke x. 17), so that it is probable that other healings were in more slender proportion to these than appears in the records, an emphasis on the part of the evangelists which reaches its maximum in the Fourth Gospel, where the casting out of demons disappears entirely and is replaced by "signs" that are amongst the most difficult to accept as history.

With regard to other healings, we know enough to-day of the power of suggestion to bring certain occurrences of this sort within the limits of observed possibility. But we do not know the outer edge of this possibility, except that there are certain factors that extend it, such as the general suggestibility of the patient and the impressiveness of the suggestion, depending largely on the personality behind it, and that both suggestibility and the power to suggest are greatly increased in movements of popular excitement. And in the gospel story we have a suggestible people, a personality of unique impressiveness and a great popular movement. With regard to the last, Mark notes that the absence of popular enthusiasm limited the healing power of Jesus (vi. 5), and in this Gospel healings practically disappear with the end of the Galilæan ministry, to appear only once again in a moment of great popular stir at Jericho. And further, it does not follow that diseases stubborn to treatment by ordinary therapeutics are necessarily furthest from the observed possibilities of suggestion.

We have also to take into account the uncertain and unscientific nature of the diagnosis. One or two symptoms would be roughly observed, and by a pardonable desire not to belittle the deed, would be interpreted as indicating the severest disease suggested by them to untrained observers. There is also an observable tendency in the first and third evangelists to enhance the miraculous. For

Mark's "fever" of Simon's wife's mother Luke has "a great fever": for Mark's Gadarene maniac and blind beggar of Jericho, Matthew has two of each; while both omit Mark's story of the healing that was not at first successful (Mark viii. 22–26).

With these considerations and allowances it seems reasonable to accept as historic the stories of healings in the first three Gospels, including the raising of Jairus' daughter, whom Jesus declared not to be dead, though, of course, the tendencies now to be considered may have been at work on some of them.

There still remain a number of miracles of a more difficult sort, such as the calming of the sea, the walking on it, the withering of the figtree, the turning of water into wine, the raising from the dead of the widow's son at Nain, and of Lazarus.

We must again take into account two factors already noticed, the uncritical mind of the age, and the tendency to enhance the wonderful, the former playing into the hands of the latter. There was a very natural desire to glorify Jesus. Legends grow up about all great men and in certain ages legends of the miraculous. And in face of the Jewish preference for the heroes of the Old Testament there would be a special leaning on the part of the early Church to any story that made Jesus as great or greater than they. The development of theology of the person of Jesus would be active in the same direction. We know from the apocryphal

Gospels that this bent of tradition was early busy with the life of Jesus, and, since it is certain that two and probable that all the Gospels are composite or re-edited works, it is possible enough that the later hands, working fifty or more years after the event, inserted a certain amount of material legendary either in origin or form, or at least considerably modified by tradition. The wonder rather is that in the first three Gospels there is so little that seems to be of this nature. Perhaps we can see a first step in this direction in Mark iv. 35–41. The boat is overtaken by one of the storms which, we are told, rise into sudden violence on the lake, to sink as suddenly. The disciples, fishermen, lose their nerve, and awake Jesus with a cry for help. If we ask what, under these circumstances, a landsman of perfect fearlessness and a strong sense of humour would do, we shall perhaps best appreciate what followed. "And he awoke, and rebuked the wind, and said unto the sea, Peace, be still." And since the storm sank without wrecking the boat, it would perhaps need more than we ought to ask of that time and place not to give the story the miraculous implication it now bears. It has also been suggested that in the withering of the fig-tree we have a parable (Luke xiii. 6–9) in the act of being transformed into history.

There was another tendency at work with those mentioned. In the religious experience even of such people as take them to be literally historic almost the whole value of such stories

as the feeding of the five thousand, the walking on the water, the raising of Lazarus, is to be found, not in their value as authentic "miracles," but in the vividness with which they express figuratively the experienced power of Jesus in the soul. If tradition gave two forms to an incident, the one which best served this purpose would be most likely to survive, and by this process of selection a comparatively short time might effect a considerable modification. If, as seems to be the case, part of the Gospel record was the apostles' preaching put into writing first by their hearers, it might easily happen that what the apostle gave as his soul's spiritual experience of Christ was understood by his hearers or by their readers as the history of an incident in the life of Jesus. And it is doubtful whether this process was altogether unconscious, for to the Hebrew mind the modern distinction between spiritual and historical can hardly be said to have existed. This is probably true of much of the Fourth Gospel: Browning tells only half the truth when he makes St. John say:—

> To me, that story—ay, that Life and Death
> Of which I wrote "it was,"—to me, it is;
> —Is, here and now: I apprehend nought else.

For the Fourth Gospel seems to be quite as much a statement of the spiritual present in the terms of the historic past. Take, for example, such a story as the conversion of water to wine. Apart from other difficulties, taken

literally it involves the moral one of providing a hundred and twenty gallons of alcoholic liquor to be served to those who have already drunk the house dry. But, read as a parable of Jesus' power to transform life, every detail becomes illuminative, especially the otherwise unintelligible reference to his death, "Mine hour is not yet come." And we have probably to refer to this influence much of the Johannine stories of the man born blind and of Lazarus.

There is probably also some evidence of this tendency in the earlier Gospels. The story of the feeding of the multitude may easily have taken its present forms under pressure of Christian experience of the Lord's Supper. It is perhaps more than a coincidence that the number fed in Mark vi. 44 is "five thousand men," and that our only indication of the size of the early Church tells us that "the number of the men came to about five thousand" (Acts iv. 4), while in the more primitive account of Mark viii. 9, the number is only four thousand. The walking on the water may be another case of this sort.

It is sometimes said that to deny miracle in the accepted sense is to deny the sinlessness of Jesus, which is a moral miracle. We shall have to return to this point later and shall deal separately with the stories of the miraculous birth and resurrection, but in the meantime it is enough to recall that sin, for all its commonness, is the only instance of what in our

experience we know to be a break in the order of God's world, i.e., the one thing that is really miraculous in the accepted sense, and therefore it follows that of all terms "miraculous" is the most unfit to apply to a sinless life.

In this connection it may be worth while to consider for a moment the effect that the view proffered here has upon our thoughts of Jesus, for it may seem to some that to banish the miraculous in the accepted sense from our estimate of his activities lessens his significance and dignity. But we have seen that the commonly accepted conception of the miraculous imputes inconsistency to God, and therefore to apply it to the deeds of Jesus cannot but detract from his significance as revealing and representing God. And the retention of it brings the same confusion in this case also. For if he had the power at will to override the laws of nature, we are tempted to ask why he did not cure all demoniacs and all diseases in the world? Why he did not feed all the hungry, restore all the mourned? Why he did not save the Baptist? Why he stilled the storm only when his own party was imperilled?

And if we think of him as possessing powers that are essentially superhuman, then just to that extent he was not man. It means that life to him was lived on terms altogether different to those under which we know it, and is therefore to that extent unintelligible to us and loses its power to reveal anything. It reduces the moral and spiritual height of his life, for, as

the French proverb says, "It is easy to walk when one leads one's horse by the bridle." To insist on this sense of the miraculous in the life of Jesus is to convert the light of life into a wildering and inhuman glitter.

IX

INSPIRATION

At the Reformation the Protestants fought the authority of the Roman Church with the authority of the Bible. Before long this led almost inevitably to belief in the inerrancy and infallibility of the Bible and in its verbal inspiration. There was, indeed, no other way without the acknowledgement of a higher court of authority than either Church or Bible.

This idea of inspiration had the advantage of decisiveness. Every word was divinely right and authoritative, dictated by God to His penmen. And it is easier to smile at it than to find a view of inspiration that can replace it in definiteness and effectiveness. For if we ask, "Supposing you give up verbal inspiration, where can you stop?" it begins to grow clear that with verbal inerrancy the Bible as the final authority in religion goes ; and we have probably here the consideration that held so large a section of Christendom to a tenet prickly with difficulties.

At this time of day it would be gratuitous to retail these difficulties were it not that, though comparatively few now hold the tenet in its extreme form, it has not yet been replaced in

common acceptance by any positive conception, and so offers the natural starting-point. We have then to see that verbal inspiration in the first instance would be useless unless God also secured (which He apparently did not) the preservation of an authoritative text, authoritative translations and authoritative lexicons and dictionaries. And verbal inspiration leaves one blank before such discrepancies as between II Sam. xxiv. 1 and I Chron. xxi. 1.

And so long as we adhere to any notion of inspiration from a source outside the human heart and mind (and every attempt to make Scripture an external authority in religion involves this) it does not help matters to say that the sense and not the diction is inspired. This modification does not explain such discrepancies as that noted above. And since different minds find different sense in the same words, the old contention would be unanswerable that no inspired writing is of use without an inspired and authoritative interpretation. Indeed, if we insist on finding an external authority for religion in the Bible, on the whole the theory of verbal inspiration is the least irrational form. For accurate wording is essential to good sense.

And every conception of inspiration that makes the Bible an external authority has the twofold effect of being an obstacle to the moral and intellectual advance of the race and to the religious faith of the morally and intellectually advanced.

Scarcely any social wrong for the last two

thousand years has lacked the support of an appeal to the authority of inspired Scripture. The persecution of heretics, the burning of witches, the divine right of kings, the African slave trade, the indiscriminate slaughter of native races by white colonists, have all justified themselves by the holy text. The Liquor trade claims the fellowship of Jesus by right of the miracle of Cana ; and the militarism of Europe could not have thriven better in a frankly atheistic atmosphere than it has on an inspired book in which, amongst other aspects not so readily absorbed, God is revealed as a Man of War. And only recently has there been a truce to the opposition to science on the ground of the discrepancy of its results with holy writ.

On the other hand, the morally difficult passages to which abuses appealed added to the difficulties created for the thoughtful by the theory of verbal inspiration in biblical statement upon scientific matters. And if questionings of this sort no longer torment Christian minds and hearts, it is not because Christendom has any more satisfactory understanding of inspiration, but because it has grown weary of the quest and retains the word "inspired" in reference to the Bible on the tacit understanding that no particular meaning is to be attached to the word.

But in practical working this theory of inspiration depends upon another of an opposite kind. For when we ask how we are to know what writings are inspired, we are driven to find the criterion in the response they evoke

from something within us: unless there were the divine within us we could not recognize the divine in any writing. There was a partial recognition of this in the contention that the Church, in establishing the canon, gave us the scriptures, and therefore herself possesses the final authority. In a sense this is true, but not in the sense that gives supreme religious authority to the official declarations of any Church, not even of one that included all the Christians of its day. For so far as the canon was concerned all official declarations followed, and were made possible only by a consensus of individual attitudes, expressing an inward and voluntary response and reliance upon an individually inward criterion. When final authority is claimed for the official declarations of the Church it involves the assumption of an external and objective Source of inspiration, which is incompatible with the Church's long uncertainty and vacillation as to the canonicity of certain books. And as things are, what but something inward to the individual can decide between the claims of various Churches to his allegiance?

And whatever our theory of inspiration, we know that we get good only from those parts of Scripture that call out this inward response. And most Christians would agree that without the aid of the Holy Spirit in our hearts we read the Scripture in vain—a confession which makes all other authority attend upon one inward to the individual man. It may be feared that to make the inward authority thoroughly supreme

would disintegrate the Church into disconnected atoms ; but the reverse is really the fact. For any unity of the Church that does not depend upon inward individual conviction is a union of convention and coercion, and not one of conviction and loyalty. On the other hand the inward authority lacks content except through fellowship, and the authority of the Church is its experienced power to evoke and bring into exercise this inward authority of its members.

But if inspiration must be thought of as ultimately inward to the human soul, can we give any more definite account of it? It will be best to begin in a field clear of theological presuppositions, and to ask what we mean when we speak of an artist as "inspired." We seem to recognize inspiration in this sphere by three interdependent qualities :—

(1) We do not use the word except of a man's best work—of work marked by freedom and mastery and abundance of creative power—of work which is consequently the completest and most delicate expression of the artist's personality : he is himself in it.

(2) The work must be in itself good, not necessarily faultless, but of positive beauty. We might say that, no matter how gloriously free the artist was in his work, we should not call it inspired unless it was good by more objective criterions, were it not for the conviction, well supported by experience, that freedom and true selfexpression of the artist are constant concomitants of objectively good work.

(3) And we stipulate that the artist in his work shall be moved by no consideration beyond the intrinsic beauty and worth of what he creates. Work which an artist allowed to be affected by considerations of money or popularity we should not call "inspired." This is very important: the man is thinking and acting from the station of a mind above that which belongs to an individual organism or an individual member of society. We are here, of course, at the point at which these essays began, that in all life's best there is a universal element, which demands to be understood as fellowship with a Universal Mind and Heart and Will. But this particular case is of interest because the point of view at which an artist does his best work is not that of giving a certain amount of pleasure to minds as they are, i.e., of gratifying popular taste, but of putting before them something that is beautiful by a standard independent of the appreciation of any particular individual or any number of individuals: he claims to have worked from the standpoint of a universal mind that gives an objective base for esthetic values. And another point of interest is that, by the common use of the word "inspired" for the best in art, the race has, in this instance, recognized the divine implication.

But though we may attribute the best of all human activity to the inspiration of God, this does not give us quite what we mean by religious inspiration, i.e., the sort of inspiration that we recognize in parts of the Bible. For the in-

spiration of art or heroism often has no explicit recognition of the divine co-partnership, and the artist and hero may repudiate all explicit belief in God. We must therefore stipulate that for religious inspiration in this more definite sense a man must recognize the Power that works with and in him. But this is a part of the fulness of all good activity, for all that pertains to conscious life advances by increased clearness as to what is involved in its activities.

And evidently something more is needed ; for Milton acknowledged the source of his inspiration, and as a poet may be called inspired, and it is probable that the belief that he was inspired added dignity to his work ; but no one would for this call his religious teaching inspired. We must therefore add that for specific religious inspiration this very relation of the Inspiring to the inspired, of God to man, must be the central interest in which he forgets himself. When we find the true artist in this we find religious inspiration in the specific sense. No other interest will serve, not even the distinction of right from wrong. Socrates may be called inspired in his ethical teaching, and he believed in God, but the difference between him and Amos in the matter of religious inspiration is obvious : to the former the divine relationship is a secondary interest, to the latter primary.

And yet we must not make these distinctions too rigid : all sorts of inspiration are connected, and their difference is a matter of proportion of the elements concerned rather than of kind.

The true artist will recognize that in the painting of a good picture he works from a surer, more universal, more selfexpressive centre than in the making of a good bargain when he sells it: in the former he is always to some extent conscious that his personality finds itself in a kinship with the universe, and though he may not give this relationship religious expression or even direct attention, it is nevertheless a felt element in his work, and the man who loses it loses his art.

On any theory of inspiration from without it is impossible to account for the restriction of the highest level of religious inspiration to one race. But taking the view suggested here and remembering that the outstanding concern of that race was precisely the relationship of God to man, and that no other race has been so concentrated upon this to the exclusion of all other high interests, such as art and philosophy; and that a racial bent is the common condition for the appearance of geniuses, it will then appear rather natural than otherwise that the Hebrew race should have shown supremacy in this direction. As will be shown later, the conditions that produced this racial concentration were modified at a certain point, which will account for the absence during the last eighteen centuries of religious writings that can in point of inspiration be compared to the highest levels of the Bible.

A man, as we saw, may write excellent poetry that contains uninspired religion. But on any

level of which we can speak of inspiration the converse is not true. On the whole, where Christendom has recognized supreme inspiration, there art recognizes supremely beautiful form. And this follows simply from our view of inspiration. For it has been said that in good literature you expect a writer and find a man. And if the highest and truest personal activity involves the inspiration of fellowship with the Universal Mind, then you cannot have that inspiration without the level of personal intensity that makes what a man writes good literature. And since a man can write good literature, that is not in the special sense religiously inspired, but cannot write what is religiously inspired without writing good literature, we have a side proof of the validity and basal nature of the religious relation.

Since inspiration is so intimately connected with the highest activities of personality, we must always be suspicious of what proffers itself as inspiration through vision or dream or any state that involves diminution of selfconsciousness. No doubt the subconscious may contribute to valuable work, but rather in the expression than in the discovery of truth. It has yet to be shown that any advance in the thought of God or man's duty has come in this way.

And since inspiration is the uplifting and energizing of the whole personality, it follows that writing is a secondary effect. The man rather than the word is inspired, and the word only through the man. So that we find the

summit of inspiration in the Man who did not write at all, but who was himself completely in every word he spoke.

Nothing is inspired for us unless we are in some true sense inspired, and all authorities must defer to that which is within, but when in the words of another we recognize the utterance of the Presence whose fellowship is essential to our personal being, then they assume an absolute authority, from which there is neither appeal nor escape. It is in the experience of a unique power in Jesus to evoke this inward recognition that his authority lies, and all attempts to give it other support, by a doctrine of his person or otherwise, obscure this fellowship and obstruct its effectiveness. One of the outstanding results of the Church's emphasis upon the theology of the person of Jesus has been to enable its members to evade the intense and unceasing reaction of his spontaneously recognized authority upon their inmost personality, which was the most marked experience of those who became his followers before he was theologized. He needs only honesty and simplicity, and he will evoke from the hearts of men a spontaneous recognition, not imparted by the authority of others, but the result of an inward collusion with "my Father which is in heaven," and on this rock he builds his Church.

X

PROVIDENCE

In thinking of providence we had better for the time set aside what are called providential answers to prayer, since the fact of prayer introduces a new element which calls for separate treatment.

By providence is generally meant that God cares for our good and wills it and works for it, and so far there is no difficulty. But just where and how we may expect God to work is a vital consideration to everyone who is eager to work with Him. And, unfortunately, the commonest elaborations of the matter have settled round two notions, both injurious to religion.

One of these two common beliefs is either directly or ultimately a belief in "special providences," in which, if we take any concrete case, we shall always find certain things implied. In the now classic story of the aunt who was prevented at the last moment from joining the boat that was shortly lost with all aboard, we see at once that "special providence" suggests that God shows favouritism; for otherwise, why did He not prevent the others from joining the ship? And if it is suggested that in this He

acted for the good of all, saving the rest perhaps from a less honourable fate ashore, then what is there "special" about the aunt's case?

Or if we call some incident of our life a "special providence" as compared, not with other men's, but with the rest of our own experience, it implies that sometimes and in some things God is better to us than in others: that His goodness is a variable quantity. And this is a quite common inference. Dean Hole's report of the old woman's thankful confession, "The Lord's been pratty well on my side this winter for greens," is only a picturesque expression of a very common attitude of mind. He has little experience of the religion of his fellows who has not heard the implied or expressed complaint that in some event "the Lord has not been good to me."

It may be suggested that by "special providence" is meant, not special care implying that otherwise God is not always as alert and careful as He might be, but that on these occasions He uses special means. But this makes it a miracle wrought for us by God, and takes us back to a conception of the miraculous as an overriding of the order of nature by a special act of the divine will, which we have already seen to be intellectually and religiously disastrous.

The term belongs to a past level of religious thought unable to think of a sovereignty that did not override law or of a love without favouritism. The only reality of which it speaks to-day is

the individual's sense of his own special importance and of the incongruity of such an estimate with any intelligible system of thought.

Another common notion of providence appears in the often heard comment on calamity, "What have I done to deserve this?" This belief also implies special acts of the divine will standing out from the natural order of the universe, but it presumes that they ought to be in proportion to human desert, only that God does not always act up to this ideal: in the same breath it posits a moral Judge of the world and questions His justice. It is a survival of an early form of religious faith whose growth and obsolescence may be traced in the Old Testament. In Judges and Deuteronomy we have a God who rewards obedience with prosperity and disobedience with disaster: in Job the constancy of this relationship is rather more than questioned: in the fifty-third chapter of Isaiah it is seen to be totally inadequate and misleading as an explanation of suffering. And we have seen that in a world in which moral good and evil received their sure and full equivalent of pleasure and pain, there could be neither unselfishness nor heroism nor any real identity of interest between man and God. So that if the supreme concern of God as moral governor of the universe is to bring man to the full of his capacity for goodness, He cannot afford to deal with man on a level of calculable deserts.

The truth to which this tenet gave primitive and now outgrown and misleading expression is

that moral distinctions are validated by the constitution of the universe, that "ought" is not a fantasy, but the key to the deepest reality. It is the first dim, inadequate explication of the faith implied in all true human life and activity. For us this means that God's activity as the moral providence of the world is to be found in what He would do and does through human co-operation; and it is made sure to us in the sureness we have that in the recognition of what is right all our universe speaks to us and, speaking, reveals its Heart. If we may think of any part of God's work as "special," it is not that which He does for us, but that which He does in and through and with us; for in all the rest God's working has limits, which by our willingness are transformed to opportunity.

Now we saw that man owed his moral freedom and personality and fellowship with God to God's selflimitation, and that in the process and constitution of nature that led up to man, God works under limiting conditions. And therefore, when we suffer at nature's hands and are tempted either to cry out against the justice of God or to suspect that it comes as a divine reprisal for unrecognized wrong-doing we are always wrong. The act to which nature (or God in nature) attaches a sequel of suffering is only the act that causes the suffering, and that act may as easily be morally good as bad: shattered health follows overwork in a good cause as surely as over-indulgence. Of the undeserved suffering involved in the working of natural laws we have

to say that God cannot help it: it is the inevitable result of the limitations under which He must work if He is to work at all. For since purpose implies limitation, the greater the worker the more inevitable the steps under which the purpose proceeds. God cannot modify the methods of His work in the universe without imperilling the end for which He undertakes it, for we may be sure that He chooses only the best means to the best end. So that in all the suffering that comes upon us by natural law, apart from that which results naturally from our own folly and sin, we can hear the call of God to bear with Him the cost of the end He seeks: the pain we bear is the price, not of life only, but of the achievement of God's purpose in life. Perhaps the best illustration of the situation is that of a general who loves his men but must expose them to privation and suffering to achieve a purpose which he counts dearer than life, and which they may know, and in knowing discover a deeper level in their general's love, and so by their very sufferings may enter into a fellowship with him in his purpose that will make their pain worth while.

And when we remember these limitations, and especially that God cannot do His will in humanity without man's willing co-operation, it answers the common reproach, "Why does not God do something? Why does not God break through to right the wrongs of the world?" All that He can do apart from human co-operation God has done: it is man's unwillingness that

bars His way to the only spot where His breaking through is needed. God does not do more because we will not let Him.

Here we begin to see the significance of the suffering that men have inflicted and still inflict on so many of those who have been most valiant in seeking the common good. For, just as innocent suffering at the hands of nature brings the opportunity of fellowship with God in the price of His purpose, so this, being fellowship in the still more painful limitation which God, for the sake of human freedom, suffers in face of human wrong-doing, brings with it the possibility of the profoundest fellowship with God, and is therefore powerful for good where even active co-operation with Him fails. And Christendom has found this to be specially true of Jesus : it is the central fact of him who stands central in the spiritual history of the world. We thus come to another aspect of God's providence, His co-operation and fellowship with men in the spiritual developments of history, but this must be left for more detailed consideration.

XI

PRAYER

THE use of prayer suffers in two ways from lack of thought. It may be cozened into pleading guilty to the charge that it is useless, and it may be put to wrong uses.

In the former it is attacked on both sides: it is challenged by the experience of unanswered prayer and by the assertion that in a law-governed universe prayer is impotent if not impertinent.

Unanswered prayer is usually accounted for by assuming that, although God can do anything, He does not do the thing we ask either because we lack faith or because what we ask would not be good for us. But these proffered reasons oscillate between a tacit but inadequate acknowledgement of the limitation of God (which they explicitly deny) and a more practical and serious self-contradiction.

For if God does not answer our prayer because we lack faith, is it because without our faith He cannot do what we ask? If so, He is limited: if not, why does He make my good, and still more my friend's good, depend on my faith? And why does He not give me faith, if He can?

And how on this assumption are we to account for the observed fact that in certain regions of the spiritual and moral realm, honest prayer is regularly effective, while in certain regions of the physical answers to prayer have no greater frequency than coincidence might account for? Every Church war memorial is a monument of unanswered prayer, certifying that prayer that can be answered only by a physical miracle is not answered. Otherwise there would have been markedly fewer casualties amongst the men who went from Christian homes than amongst others ; and also amongst the Christian homes we should have to regard bereavement as an evidence of more than ordinary lack of spirituality. Was there no faith in the hearts of all who now mourn? And what escape is there from these absurd and impious conclusions except on the understanding that God is limited in what He does?

And the proffered alternative that God does not answer prayer because it would not be good for us survives examination no better, for though it might certainly sometimes be the reason, it is all the more obvious that there are cases in which it cannot apply. In this connection a great deal of irreverent and harmful nonsense passes for pious resignation. Some one we love is dangerously ill, and we are trying to win him back to life and praying for the success of our efforts. But if he dies and we say that God took him because it was best for both of us, then when we were trying to keep him alive

we were trying to defeat the good and wise will of God, and it was wrong to do so : but we are absolutely certain that it was not wrong to fight for his life. It is, in fact, common to hear people in one breath comfort themselves that what God has done is for the best, and that they did their best to defeat it. So that this explanation of unanswered prayer has the disadvantage of denying our surest moral judgements.

And, of course, the case becomes clearer when it is a spiritual good for which we pray. There can be no doubt as to its being good for us. Why does it not come? There cannot be even an attempt to answer that it would not be good for us, and we are thrown back upon "lack of faith," only to ask again why God does not give us the necessary faith, seeing it would surely be good for us. So that if we refuse to see behind unanswered prayer a limit to God's power, we are compelled to see in it a limit to His goodness.

From the other side we are told that to pray is to ask God to work miracles for us, and miracles do not happen, therefore prayer is useless. But the miracle declared to be impossible is a break in the order of the universe, a case in which the same antecedents are not followed by the same consequence, i.e., an inconsistency in God's working ; and from this it would rather follow that prayer, being the introduction of a fresh antecedent, is bound to be followed by some difference of consequence, but just what difference needs exploration.

By common experience we are sure that, whether prayer makes any other difference or not, it makes a great difference to the man who prays. It brings him calm and courage and strength : it helps him to be himself : it enhances all personal activities : it confirms his grasp of the personal values that circumstances would wrest from him. And this experience follows inevitably upon the main line of our thought, for if the essential thing in human personality is the presence in man of a universal and divine element, then, since personality develops by the unfolding of what is implied in it, it has a continual source of strength and life in communion with God.

If this is a true account of the experienced benefit of prayer to ourselves, it will be found capable of extension to show the reasonable possibility of effects of prayer wider than that of mental reaction upon the man who prays.

The possibility of telepathic communication of mind with mind, apart from recognized physical means, is generally admitted, but is a comparatively rare occurrence, and is not sufficiently amenable to conscious control to be ordinarily useful. Now by far the greater number of experienced answers to prayer would be very simply explained if we could suppose that in prayer this particular power of personality becomes increased ; and the experienced effect of general quickening of the whole personality by prayer makes this a reasonable supposition.

We know also something of the power of

mind over body, especially in matters of health. And this is a power that can hardly but be increased by the calm and joy and confidence that prayer brings : indeed, prayer leads to just that enthronement of the spiritual that is effective here.

Both these phenomena provide a way in which God can answer our prayer, because our prayer itself puts at His service an instrument by which He can work through our minds upon our bodies and upon the minds of others. Nor is there any obvious reason why, if we allow these two means separately, we should not take them together in understanding how God can use our prayer to help the bodily health of our friends.

And if our prayer thus puts at God's disposal an instrument for good which He otherwise lacks, we see at once how our lack of faith (i.e., prayer that does not apprehend God at all, or that involves a radical misunderstanding of Him) makes it impossible for Him to answer.

And we must recognize that there are limits to what prayer can effect whether for ourselves or others, and whether for spiritual or physical good. If answer to prayer is part of God's order in the universe, it will be subject to its own conditions and laws.

Limits are set to the effectiveness of prayer by the nature of that about which we pray. This is most clearly apparent when we pray for the spiritual good of others : they may resist the influence of God that plays upon them through our prayers, just as they may resist

His will in other ways. And God cannot help this except by cancelling the freedom of their wills, and so making prayer for their spiritual good absurd.

And there seem to be limits to the powers of mind over the physical, and so to God's power to answer our prayers in this direction ; which is confirmed by the already noted experience of failure of prayer in this region. It appears to be necessary to God's purpose that it should be so. For loyalty to the laws of life, the diligent discovery and use of them, the acceptance of risk and the possibility of failure even in matters of life and death, all are essential to the making of character, but all these would be abolished by prayer unless its effectiveness was very limited in the physical realm. If every man prayed when any good was imperilled and every prayer was answered, the conditions of all that is virile and heroic would disappear : there would be no incentive to experiment and labour and venture. Probably the soundest and most loyal attitude is to understand that outside the body (of ourselves or others) we are not to expect answers to prayer in the physical sphere. And with regard to health, too, prayer has its limits, which suggests that it is incomplete without the other line of endeavour along which medicine works by the discovery and use of the laws of nature. St. James (ii. 14-17) mocks the sham faith that says to the naked and hungry, Be warmed and filled, but gives nothing needful to this end, and the same might be said of the

faith that says to the body, Be healed, and does not give it the things needful to healing.

That the effectiveness of prayer has limits is nothing new, for the common formula of petition is "If it be Thy will." But is it not very likely that, if it is not God's will to give us something, it is not His will that we should pray for it? So that if we thus acknowledge limits we ought not to leave them without an attempt to define, for if the limits are not intelligible our prayer cannot be intelligent. And then, too, when we have prayed, say for health or another's spiritual good, and the asked result has not come, how does this stand in our fellowship with God? We must know this if we are to face the situation rightly. Does God not want men to be healthy and good? Or was the prayer through which I strove to know God's fellowship in the achievement of good so distasteful to Him that it prejudiced my petition? I cannot think these things, and yet what other way is there unless I acknowledge that God wants these things but is limited by the conditions under which He works. But granted those limitations, then my unanswered prayer brings me a profounder fellowship with Him in loss and sorrow.

These considerations bring us to see that the important thing in prayer is not to seek God for the accomplishment of our will, but to discover His will and to find in Him power to co-operate in its fulfilment. And to see this is to understand why, when we ask, and ask

earnestly, for spiritual goods for ourselves we do not always get them, a difficulty which limitations imposed by the wills of others or by physical laws do not explain. For instance, I want to be rid of some evil element in my character : I am quite sure that it is God's will that it should go, and I pray about it, but the prayer remains ineffectual. And we need to remember that the human mind has its own laws, and that a tendency to a certain attitude or act can be overcome only by setting against it an interest of sufficient and sufficiently constant emotional power. In other words, we are sure of being able to do the right thing only if we have the right motive. And when we question the motive of a desire we are questioning its relation to the whole system of interests that gives contents to our personality. So that when I say that I want to get rid of this evil thing and am sure it is God's will that it should go, that is not enough to secure an effective divine fellowship for its defeat. For it may be that I want it removed for quite a different reason to any that is in the mind of God. I may want to be rid of it chiefly because I fear that it may lessen my good reputation with others or my comfortable thoughts of myself ; which things are not of God. If prayer is to be effective here, I must ask why God wants what I ask for, and this will bring all that I can understand of His will and of His goodness to bear upon the whole system of my personality and interests. And then I understand that God could not give me the one

thing I asked without giving me much more than I was willing to take.

The lack of faith that here makes prayer ineffective is nothing but a failure honestly and vividly to put before ourselves the character and will of the God with whom we have to do. Prayer can do nothing unless it is in the first place our admission of, and willing co-operation with, the creative power of God in our own souls and lives. Recognition of this will save persistence in prayer from degenerating into obstinate reiteration, for we see that we never have to move God's willingness : all removable obstacles lie in ourselves and our fellows ; and our persistence must be aimed at the discovery of these in God's presence and the removal of them by His co-operation. Here we find the need of prayer " in the name of Jesus," for the man that is honestly eager to know the will and character of God and to detect the things in himself that inhibit His presence and power turns naturally to where he finds these things made clearest and most incisive. The first practical step in prayer is to set before our minds Jesus, lest we misunderstand the God to whom we pray ; and we shall find that we cannot do this without experiencing an urgency of transformation calling, by all we count dear and sacred, for our willing fellowship in its working.

XII

JESUS AND HISTORY

THE teaching and work of Jesus was chiefly concerned with the nature and coming of the Kingdom of God, and was therefore based on the conviction that the history of the world was in essence a process of religious and ethical development which had reached its most critical moment in his day ; to which we may add that he knew himself called to play the leading part in this world-crisis. So that we can understand neither the work of Jesus nor his conception of himself until we see him in relation to the history of the world.

Ultimately the historic significance of Jesus for to-day depends upon what history means to us, so that we must first try to see the spiritual development of the world in its broadest aspect. And for this purpose we may begin with the reaction of man's growing intelligence upon modes of conduct received by heredity, physical or social, from his sub-human ancestors. In the long struggle for existence certain habits of conduct had given the groups that possessed them an advantage that enabled them to survive to the extinction of the rest, and to transmit their

habits to posterity. When not purely instinctive, these modes of conduct were followed in unquestioning obedience to custom, which was for long, and in the lower levels of civilization is still, blindly accepted as absolute monarch : it was inconceivable and ridiculous to act otherwise than as one's fellow tribesmen acted.

But another most important factor in the survival of man in competition with the lower animals and with other men was intelligence. And although intelligence was for long the drudge of unintelligently accepted ends, this could not continue for ever. It was so important a factor in survival that it could not but increase, and the time inevitably came when men began to ask themselves why they should observe this or that irksome restraint, or do this or that laborious and dangerous thing when they could not see how it benefited themselves. This was a momentous change. Unquestioning custom was no longer a sufficient guide for human conduct, but must be replaced by recognized and accepted values : a man must see the worth of what he is doing.

The significance of this change lay in a condition imposed by the intelligence that induced it. If man is to shape his conduct by measuring the worth of his acts or of what he seeks by them, then the various possible objects of his endeavour must be brought into intelligible relation to each other so that he may have some sort of stability in his preferences, and not be for ever contradicting himself and destroying

to-day what he built yesterday and will want again to-morrow. And the strengthening of memory and the increasing purposiveness and inter-relatedness of life as it becomes more intelligent bring an almost constant juxtaposition of possible but incompatible tendencies. So that the internalizing of the springs of conduct must proceed to an attempted unification of all man's interests into an intelligible and workable system.

But man soon discovers that he is possessed by various tendencies that do not readily submit to the unifying process. Chiefly there are two great opposing groups, one centring round the instinct for selfpreservation and including all action that contributes visibly to the safety or comfort or pleasure of the individual, and the other including all tendencies in which these considerations are subordinated to a larger good—the instincts of parenthood, of protection, of taking pains and risk for family or tribal good. In the subhuman life these two lie side by side and are effective alternately without raising any inward conflict, for the inward life is not continuous and organized enough for their antagonism to create a noticeable disturbance of it. But as soon as man begins to think of his life or himself as a whole, then the antagonism appears and raises the great problem of human life, Which is to be put first?

The easier way is to put selfinterest first. It has a rational base in the superior vividness and inescapability of a man's own pleasures and pains and, on the higher intellectual level, in the

greater intimacy and continuity of a man's experience of himself. And the emotional elements of the selfregarding tendencies are massive and persistent and capable of great intensity.

But the endeavour to unify life under self-interest is disastrous. It perverts the finest of life's values ; art, thought, friendship, love, on a basis of selfinterest are made hateful. It destroys the cement of the social structure, for though in certain respects a man may act for public good because of the pleasure he finds in reputation, popularity and fame, he will confine himself to what is popular, and his activity will last only so long as his motive is more or less exceptional and not likely to be recognized, in which case he loses his reward. A community of selfinterested men cannot hold long together.

But to unify our inward life under a supreme interest in the common good is by no means easy, for though on occasion the impulse to act for others is very strong, it has neither the continuity of selfinterest nor the obvious logical base in the incommunicably individual nature of our sensations. If a man decides to live for selfinterest he simply suppresses or suborns the altruistic impulses ; if he takes the alternative, he cannot proceed so, but must make room for at least so much of selfregard as to be bound to answer the question, How can it be rational for the individual to act in any but the individual's interest? And this necessity makes it clear that unselfish action is rational only for a being whose real nature is given, not in the individuality

of the organism, but in the universal elements by which he feels and thinks and acts from a point of view above selfinterest. This we have seen to be the condition and root of religion, and it is in religion only that the supremacy of interest in the common good finds its rational base. If our own highest good and the very condition of our achieving personality is fellowship with a universal Will that wills the good of all, then unselfishness becomes rational, not otherwise.

To recognize this is only to repeat a commonplace of religious and moral history. In the early stages religion was the social bond and gave sanction to all the curtailment of individual desire that the social fabric needed. In the stage of the national religions it is one with patriotism, the then widest impulse to common good. And the universal religions at their best have all called men to the service of humanity.

But the power of religion to give a rational base for the helpful life varies with its thought of God. While any selfpreference or reserve of selfconcern is attributed to Him, there are narrow limits to the human unselfishness that finds its reasonable warrant in fellowship with Him, and, what is perhaps more important, the emotional support which faith in Him gives to such attitude and action is weak. And we must also recognize that, in the earlier stages of religion, the estimate of the character of God could not rise above that of accepted morality.

These considerations will help us to under-

stand one of the most puzzling features of history—the commonness with which in the development of various races, when unthinking obedience to custom begins to give way to thought, we find disastrous decline in the loyalty to public good and in the ethical and spiritual life generally ; and it is hard to find an exception in which Christianity has not been a factor. When once any individual in a community begins consciously to unify life upon a basis of selfinterest his action creates conditions that make it exceedingly difficult for the rest not to follow his lead. For a man to live for the common good in a society containing selfish men, and especially to maintain an attitude above selfconcern when he himself becomes the object of selfish attack demands a heroic level of mind and heart. And at the time when growth of intellect compelled men first to seek one controlling principle in life and therefore made selfishness possible, there did not exist in the world, and there was not the possibility of, the thought of a God of an unselfishness complete enough to give rational base and emotional support for man to live unselfishly in the face of such opposition. Mere goodwill in God was not enough. What was needed was a goodwill without any reserve of selfconcern, so complete and intense as to be willing to suffer all for the common good. Only the thought of a God who loves His enemies could supply this need, for lack of which we see the moral and spiritual progress of the world in race after

race arrested and turned back until they sank impotently to make way for more primitive peoples, who, in their turn, followed the same fate.

The significance of Jesus is that he brought the world this needed thought of God.

The above sketch has necessarily been in the most abstract outline. In concrete fact the several stages overlapped, so that all degrees of development are found side by side. And what we marked as revolutionary crises were often slow developments beginning imperceptibly and for long appearing only confusedly and sporadically, and not till their later stages coming into clear and consistent effectiveness. But these considerations do not lessen the general worth of the account : it is, for instance, probably true that few men deliberately and thoroughly organize life on a basis of self-interest, but it is quite common for it to be easily recognizable as the dominant interest where a man does think about what he is doing, however seldom that may be.

It is possible that there are races to-day in the very early stages of this process, but it is the experience of missionaries that the results of the higher stages of religious and moral evolution are in part at least assimilable by races that of themselves seem to be on the lowest. And it is a matter of history that with the present higher races, in almost every case, the higher stages of religious development have been initiated by foreign influence. This gives a

special significance to the particular line of development which first reached the highest level.

We therefore turn to the remarkable development that took place during the last thousand years or so B.C. in western Asia and round the eastern Mediterranean. The only possible claimant to an earlier, higher religious attainment is India, but the pantheism in which Indian religion culminated is so destructive of personal values that its superiority could be established only on an understanding of religion quite other than that held here. In the region first mentioned the peculiar distribution of stretches of cultivable land separated by natural barriers and situated at the juncture of three continents offered unique advantages as a place for human development. The natural barriers of desert and mountain, river and sea, gave settled life sufficient immunity from nomad incursion, and at a later stage for a long time preserved the independence of small states and so allowed patriotism, the most spiritual of the instinctive virtues, to reach its highest point, as it did in Greece during and for a little after the Persian wars, in the early Roman Republic, and in Maccabæan Palestine.

But the barriers between country and country were not too great to permit exchange of thought, which was the more stimulating because of the variety of races due to the continental position. The result was a quickening of intellect that hastened the time when men began

to ask "Why" with regard to their conduct. With its enormous possibilities both for good and bad, personality began to assert itself. We see it in the individualism of Sophist ethics, in the personal ambitions of the Roman generals who wrecked the Republic, in the personal religion of Jeremiah and in Ezekiel's assertion of individual moral responsibility.

Another important result of the same conditions was that, as civilization grew, the barriers that had hitherto been sufficient were crossed by armies and navies, and the old struggle for survival, which, in its crudest forms and as between smaller sections of humanity, had been suppressed and partly extirpated by religious fellowship within the nation, could not but begin again between nation and nation, since there was no analogous bond to overcome the antagonisms of suspicion and ambition and greed. And the process so begun could end only by one power becoming supreme over the whole known earth. And even then the solution could not be permanent unless the bond of dominating force was replaced by one of a more human and therefore voluntary nature, grounded on the supersession of selfpreference, personal and national, by fellowship with a universal Will for good. So the Jew had his vision of one brute empire after another rising and passing till permanence should be found in the Empire of God (Dan. vii.).

In the meantime the long international struggle reacted strongly on the religion of

those concerned. The progress of the struggle intensified national selfconsciousness and patriotism and national religion: its end had the reverse effect, for it is seldom possible to separate patriotism and national independence, and at the national stage of religion, where each nation has its peculiar god or gods, defeated and subjugated nations meant defeated and discredited gods.

So that Rome in unifying the known world by conquest took the life out of all religions and patriotisms, and in the process lost her own, for the very low intellectual level of her native religion brought about its speedy decay as soon as she came into touch with more thoughtful peoples, and the wealth of her conquests corrupted her patriotism. The world became one by an external bond of military power, but was without any inward cohesion of positive common purpose: it was a body without a soul.

The one exception to this state of things, and therefore the one nation from which the religion of the world might be relighted, was Israel. Through centuries of defeat and subjugation she had held only the more passionately to her religion. This could happen only to a nation strongly convinced that, despite the experience of defeat, her religion was higher than that of her conquerors, and could not but happen to such a one. And under the international conditions obtaining at this period in this quarter of the globe, the thorough and continuous process of contact and contest would

naturally result in leaving in this position that nation which, of all concerned, had the highest religion.

Israel came of that great Semitic stock that, as a whole, has shown itself to possess qualities of unique significance in the moral and religious history of the world. Her position allowed her to develop nationally and brought her into stimulating contact with other peoples, which took her beyond her Arabian kindred, while her comparative poverty and simplicity of life gave her religion a better chance than it had with the otherwise occupied Semites of the Euphrates valley. And when at length Babylon thought it necessary finally to subjugate Judæa, and found so sturdy a spirit that the only effective way seemed to be by transporting everybody of any importance to where they could be under her immediate eye, the captives, facing intimate comparison with the religion of their conquerors, could not but feel that their own was unquestionably higher. The inference from this was that their God was not the God of Israel only, with His glory attendant upon Israel's prosperity, but was God of the whole world. The thought was not new to them : it sprang first from the characteristic ethical element of their religion, which was its outstanding point of superiority, and came to consciousness in the prophets' conviction that Israel must not rely on proprietary rights in the favour of God, who would deal with her on an ethical basis only and would cast her off if she would not repent.

And in Amos (ix. 7) the predominance of this ethical basis showed its universalistic core in the declaration, "Have not I brought up Israel out of the land of Egypt, and the Philistines from Caphtor, and the Syrians from Kir?" But it was the experience in Babylon that made the whole people conscious that they alone knew the God of the whole earth truly, and this conviction kept their religion alive and able to develop to new heights under the very conditions that everywhere else in the known world saw it decline.

In Israel alone lay the hope of the ethical and religious and therefore of the political future of the world: none but Israel could give an inward substantiality to its outward unity and a zest for common good that should replace obsolescent patriotism by zeal for the Kingdom of God. And the greatest Hebrew prophets saw the glory of the race's destiny here: Israel was to be the light of the Gentiles.

And yet something was lacking. The very prophets who foresaw this great destiny did not presume to enter upon it: they felt that something further was needful. We have seen what that something was. Israel believed sufficiently in a righteous God to be sure that in the end they would triumph over their enemies and oppressors, but they did not believe in a God whose love was pure enough to make them love their enemies and want to share with them the greatest treasure of their race.

And so the world waited upon a critical edge

of disaster for what Israel only could give and what Israel was not yet ready to give. The sense of an impending world crisis gloomed over the most sensitive souls and found voice in the Baptist's cry, "Even now is the axe laid unto the root of the trees." But though the Baptist could feel the danger he could not see the remedy: he was only sure that it would come, "There cometh after me he that is mightier than I." And it may be that Jesus, listening, became conscious that he was that mightier one, for he had in his heart such a truth of God's love as could turn doom to a new beginning and bring in the Kingdom of God.

(In this chapter and elsewhere older and more familiar terms have been preferred to those of the new psychology, which has not developed special terms for what here most concerns us. The ethical distinction between selfish and unselfish, or altruistic, is not the same as the distinction between the ego instinct or complex and those of the herd. It emerges with the necessity of bringing the various instincts into conscious harmony, and is the crux of that problem. It cuts across all of them, for certain elements of the sex and herd instincts contribute only too readily to selfishness, while certain elements of the ego and of the sex—especially the parental—instincts are essential to an unselfish life.)

XIII

JESUS' AIM

WE have seen that Jesus lived at the most critical juncture of the world's history. We have now to see how his knowledge of this shaped the aim of his work.

The religious standpoint of the Jew was above all historical. The dominant ethical element of their religion and the consequently broad, social nature of their ethics led in this direction. The great Hebrew prophets were politicians and their writings are full of what, were it not for their religious strain, we should call philosophy of history. The unique religious place which they were conscious of holding in the world compelled them to understand their religion in the light of the history that had brought them to such a position. And the apocalyptic literature which rose in the centuries immediately before and after Jesus was again an interpretation of history with a projection into the history of the future. To a Jew of Jesus' day the historic standpoint was not only natural, but, if he was to be understood by his fellows, necessary. We might go further and say that it was part of the solid gain of Jewish

religion, on which any further advance must be based.

We must remember that Christianity rapidly passed out from the nation of its birth to other peoples whose dominant religious attitude was sacramental or metaphysical or legal, and that our records come to us through these media, which to some extent reacted upon them. But in spite of this, the teaching of Jesus, as we have it in the first three Gospels, shows us that he appropriated and used the historic standpoint of his race. His central interest is the Kingdom of God, a historical conception. His characteristic use of the term "the Son of man" shows the importance he found in the vision and interpretation of Daniel vii., with its review of the world empires and its forecast of God's Kingdom. And we are thus reminded that to think of the Kingdom of God was to think, not only historically, but in the terms of world-history: for in both the apocalyptists and the older Hebrew prophets the very conception of the Kingdom of God involved relations to the kingdoms of the world. It is sometimes contended that Jesus' restriction of himself and his followers in his lifetime to work amongst the Jews indicates his lack of the wider thoughts of his predecessors, but a simple explanation lies in the practical advantage of concentrating upon Israel as the best means for reaching the world.

The place of the Kingdom of God in the teaching of Jesus gives us his estimate of the

importance of the march of humanity through the ages. And there is evidence that he understood his time to be the critical point of that progress. His teaching and, even more, his work is full of a sense of urgency. "The Kingdom of God is at hand," "The harvest truly is plenteous, but the labourers are few," "Leave the dead to bury their own dead, but go thou and publish abroad the Kingdom of God," etc. The harvest time, the culmination of the long waiting, was his favourite figure for his day.

The event that he saw approaching and that gave supreme and critical gravity to his day was neither predestined doom nor blessing, but the possibility of either. He saw that the vindication of God's kingship was coming, either in the collapse and dissolution of society for lack of, or through refusal of, the truth of God, or in the beginning of a new world through its power. He was sure of this vindication, but just which alternative would be most largely realized he was not sure: "I say unto you that He will vindicate them (the oppressed faithful) speedily. Howbeit when the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?" (See Luke xvii. 22–xviii. 8.)

Whether the coming event should be doom or blessing depended upon two things, the availability of a truth of God sufficient to overcome the socially and spiritually destructive human bent to selfpreference, and the acceptance of this truth by mankind. Jesus'

possession of the only truth of God efficient against human selfishness is evinced in the teaching, "I say unto you, Love your enemies . . . and ye shall be sons of the Most High, for He is kind towards the unthankful and evil" (Luke vi. 27–35), and his practical task was therefore to get men to accept the truth of a God of unselfish love and to commit themselves to a life befitting the truth; and this must be done in the short time that still remained before the inevitable laws of the world worked themselves out in the dissolution of a Godless and selfish civilization.

He began, therefore, by preaching repentance, a "change of mind" involving a new attitude to life, a new thought of God, and a new conduct towards men. His choice of this method was probably deliberate and not that of one to whom words were easier than deeds. The surprise of the Nazarenes (Mark vi. 2) suggests that before his appearance as a public teacher he had given no indication of such aptitude. The mountain vision of the kingdoms of the world (Matt. iv. 8; Luke iv. 5) shows that he felt the temptation of all men of action to attempt the reformation of the world by the short cut of coercion, but that he saw its ultimate futility. And his choice of the method of teaching marks his knowledge that no real and permanent triumph of good can be won except by the appeal of truth to the free soul of man.

Unlike John, who remained in the wilderness teaching those who came, Jesus sought the

people in their homes, toured the towns and villages preaching, and set others to do the same. He evidently attempted and expected a national repentance. If this was so, he failed; and those who recorded his life shrank from thinking that he did not do all he sought to do, and so the evidence has had to come through an antagonistic medium, and the part that this failure must be given in a true estimate of his life and death was very largely passed over in silence by the early Church. But the evidence is so strong that we must recognize the fact and give it place. The thoroughness with which he evangelized the whole people is significant, and we cannot think he would have called for a repentance wider than he hoped or expected. He speaks of Israel as the children of the Kingdom even when they refused to enter (Matt. viii. 12). The twelve apostles suggest the full tale of Israel's tribes, a hope that finds expression in "Ye shall sit on twelve thrones, judging" (in the manner of the book of Judges) "the twelve tribes of Israel" (Luke xxii. 30). Jesus "upbraided" certain cities "because they repented not" (Matt. xi. 20—24; Luke x. 13—15). What is this but disappointed expectation? We have the same feeling behind the lament over Jerusalem (Matt. xxiii. 37; Luke xiii. 34). His determination to die nowhere but in the capital (Luke xiii. 33) and his choice of the most national of all institutions, the Temple, as the point of his challenge to the authorities, indicate that in face of deadly

opposition from the heads of the nation he gave but greater emphasis to the national scope of his appeal.

The nation, as a whole, and not only its official authorities refused the repentance to which he called them. We cannot but believe that what he asked for he thought possible. He may not have expected every individual in Israel, and he doubtless soon came to see that there was little to expect from the authorities, but apart from this there could doubtless have been a genuinely national movement affecting the nation as a whole. Had they responded in this way, what was the next step of his intent? We cannot doubt that it was to lead Israel to the fulfilment of the destiny, which the greatest of the old prophets had foretold, of being a light to the Gentiles, of taking into the world the needed truth of God. The Kingdom of God in the vision of the prophets was a world kingdom with Israel in the highest place; and to Jesus the highest place in the Kingdom of God belonged to the servant of all, and how could Israel best serve the world otherwise than with the truth? There are evidences of this world-intent in the teaching of Jesus. The temptation of the mount shows that from the first all the kingdoms of the world were within the purview of his purpose. He told his followers, "Ye are the light of the world" (Matt. v. 14). The larger scope will explain his concentration upon Israel as the directest road to reaching

the whole world. And the instructions in which that concentration is embodied, "Go not into any way of the Gentiles, and enter not into any city of the Samaritans: but go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel" (Matt. x. 5, 6), read rather as though they were spoken against a background of teaching that might otherwise have led the twelve to a wider scope. The clearest indication lies in the statement that the Son of man (whose coming was, according to the Danielic symbol, the establishment of the Kingdom) should be a sign to that generation of the same kind that Jonah was to the Ninevites, i.e., a Jew preaching to Gentiles (Luke xi. 30). And if we take this in conjunction with the command to the twelve to limit themselves to the "cities of Israel, till the Son of man be come" (Matt. x. 23) the nature and scope of his ultimate aim become clear. Israel's duty to the world was involved in the point on which he chose to die, for the Temple court, whose cleansing roused the chief priests to seek his death (Mark xi. 18), was the Court of the Gentiles, and he emphasizes this aspect, "Is it not written, My house shall be called a house of prayer for all nations?" (Mark xi. 17).

Had the nation given him the response for which he asked, and of which he knew them capable, we should not only have seen the forces of early Christianity multiplied more than a thousandfold, but the tremendous force of Jewish patriotism, instead of driving the race

on to the fatal fight with Rome, would have found its true activity in a more glorious warfare in conquest of the world. It is reasonable to suppose that this could have happened, and that, had it happened, the history of the world would have shown at that time a change for which no term would have been adequate but the coming of the Kingdom of God. As it was, Christianity overran the Empire in three centuries and at its fall became the seed of most of what was best in the centuries following : multiplied as it might have been, it would have given the Empire a soul to live by before it was too late, and would certainly have anticipated the barbarian invasions by an invasion of the Gospel that would have obviated the Dark Ages.

It may be asked how such an intent and his belief in its possibility was compatible with Jesus' expectation of death, but the consummation of such a task either in success or failure demands no less than all from its protagonist, who, to make success even possible, must face opposition that will not be scrupulous of life.

XIV

THE DEATH OF JESUS[1]

WE have been trying to understand the aim of Jesus and his means, and have now to seek an understanding of the death which he incurred in his endeavour.

His early work in Galilee was very popular. The authority of his utterances amazed his hearers, but his healings were an even greater attraction, so that the demand for the healer began to impede the preacher (Mark i. 35—38, 45). In view of the boldness of his speech it is not strange that he met with criticism from the local scribes, but they seem at least sometimes to have accepted his defence (Mark ii. 12, "They were all amazed and glorified God"), and Jesus, where he differs from them, treats them with a courteous deference (Mark ii. 17, 21, 22); while the plot of Mark iii. 6 belongs to a later time (vide *infra*).

But before very long emissaries came down from the capital, and Jesus' two recorded en-

[1] For further details of some points raised in this essay see the author's paper in the *Constructive Quarterly*, March 1920.

counters with them (Mark iii. 22–30 and vii. 1–23) are both marked by a rapid and fierce blaze of antagonism. In the latter, Jesus replies to their question with a charge of betraying their religion, and goes on to a pronouncement against the Mosaic distinction of clean and unclean; and immediately on this breach he leaves Galilee for heathen territory.

His departure for the north was also shortly and probably causally preceded by two events. Herod had put John to death, and was now beginning to be uneasy about Jesus (Mark vi. 14), and his fears were doubtless a factor in the plot of Mark iii. 6, which, since it evolved the collaboration of Pharisees and Herodians, could hardly have preceded Herod's awareness of Jesus.

To this time must be referred his upbraiding of the Galilæan cities "because they repented not." He had not succeeded in Galilee, and now work there was no longer safe. His words, "If the mighty works had been done in Tyre and Sidon, which were done in you, they would have repented long ago" (Matt. xi. 21; Luke x. 13), suggest the question, Why then did he not turn to the heathen? And his strange manner with the Syrophœnician woman (Mark vii. 24–30; Matt. xv. 21–28, especially verse 24) may be the result of struggle with a temptation to do so. But Israel alone, in virtue of its peculiar religious development, could give him the way he wanted to the whole world, despite the fact that from the same source grew

the bitterness of the opposition with which he was confronted. For their own sake and for the world's sake he must not leave his work amongst his people unfinished.

But if destruction threatened him in Galilee, it was more dangerous still in Jerusalem. From there had come the opposition. He had probably already tested Jerusalem (Luke xiii. 33 ff. John v. 1–18), and he knew that faithfulness there would mean death. Possibly even at this time the thought was not new to Jesus: he was familiar with the common fate of the faithful. Nor did he look on his death as an evidence of failure, but rather as a means to triumph. "He began to teach them that the Son of man must suffer" (Mark viii. 31) in evident reference to Daniel vii. where the Son of man symbolizes the saints of God, who through suffering are given the eternal and world-wide Kingdom of God (verses 18, 21, 22, 25–27).

But the position was difficult. His whole work was based on the consciousness of possessing a unique experience of God and of therefore standing in unique relation to the world crisis. And if faithfulness to his mission brought him to where he must die, and if his death was to be effective for the truth, then it was imperative that his followers should understand. So he asks them, "Who say ye that I am?" and accepts the answer, "Thou art the Christ." "And he charged them that they should tell no man of him" (Mark viii.

29, 30), the reason for which will appear later.

The interval between the confession at Cæsarea Philippi and his arrival at Jerusalem just before Passover was occupied chiefly in going over Jewish territory outside Herod's dominion. Here, too, as in Galilee, Jesus seems to have sent out disciples to preach the Kingdom (Luke x. 1 ff.). He purposely makes his entry to Jerusalem impressive and suggestive, and it ends in a noticeable survey of the Temple (Mark xi. 11). Next day he drives from the great outer court of the Temple the sellers of cattle and doves with their wares, overturns the money-changers' tables and assumes control of the precincts, stopping their use as a thoroughfare for goods (Mark xi. 15–17). The state of things that Jesus attacked was condemned by the conscience of the people, which explains the moral power by which one man was unresistingly allowed to take control of a national institution. The people recognized the act as befitting a prophet of God: even the chief priests do not venture to question the rightness of the act but only its authority. The latter, as the custodians of the Temple, were directly responsible for the abuse and possibly profited by it, but their culpability was shared by all who by their influence or by their place upon the Sanhedrin might have made effective protest but connived. His action could not be ignored by the authorities: they were bound either to submit to his authority or to take such steps

as might be necessary to put a stop to his conduct. It called upon the scene men who were prepared to act. And when, having drawn from them, by his reference to their treatment of the Baptist, a betrayal of their insincerity, Jesus refuses to discuss the matter further, they resolve upon his destruction and in a few days accomplish their purpose. On this act, therefore, Jesus chose to die.

What was the reason of his choice? To understand it we must go back a little.

To Jesus the gravity of the opposition was not the danger to his person but the obstruction it caused to his work. His opponents "shut the kingdom of heaven against men" (Matt. xxiii. 13). The sternness of Jesus' dealing with the deputation that came from Jerusalem to Galilee is significant. He is anxious to counteract their influence with the people: "And he called unto him the multitude again, and said unto them, Hear me all of you, and understand . . ." (Mark vii. 14). The extreme severity of his reply to those who suggested that he cast out demons by the prince of demons, must be taken with, "If I, by the finger of God, cast out demons, then is the kingdom of God come upon you": it cut at his power to move the people Godward (Mark iii. 22–30; Matt. xii. 22-32; Luke xi. 14–23). The influence and prestige of the Jerusalem authorities was the greatest of all the factors that were withholding the people from the repentance to which he called them. Jesus

knew the men with whom he had to deal, and that he must either give way to them or die at their hands. And it accords with all we know of him to suppose that he resolved, if he must die, so to choose the occasion of his death as by it to remove the obstacle that was imperilling his purpose. He would put the authorities in a position in which they must either submit to him or must kill him in such a way as would destroy their influence with the people and free them for his purpose: he would "give his life a ransom for many." And the point at which he struck was exactly calculated to have this effect. It made a direct appeal to the moral judgement of the people and one to which they responded readily, so that the chief priests knew that in opposing him they would have the people against them (Mark xi. 18, xii. 12). And yet his assumption of control of the Temple court compelled them to act: to leave him alone would be a confession of defeat.

The interpretation of the cleansing of the Temple as an appeal to the people to judge between him and his opponents explains the unusual and deliberate way in which, by the manner of his entry to Jerusalem, he called attention to himself and his movements, focussing the mind of the people upon his immediate actions. It also explains his nightly departure from Jerusalem (Mark xi. 19): he would compel the authorities not only to action but to public action: if they arrested him, the arrest

should be in the Temple before the people. It shows why, though it was necessary for the disciples to answer the question, "Who say ye that I am?" it was no less necessary for them to keep his Christhood secret. The introduction of this element would obscure the clear moral and religious issue which the cleansing of the Temple put before the people, and remove the controversy between Jesus and the authorities from a region in which what was sound in the conscience of the people would have declared in his favour to one where their immaturity and prejudice made it practically certain that they would decide against him.

But if this was Jesus' intent, things did not go as he intended. A sudden and marked change comes over him. "He began to be greatly amazed and sore troubled. And he said unto them, My soul is exceedingly sorrowful even unto death." And the sorrow goes its deadly course through the agony of Gethsemane to the cry of desolation on the cross. The cause of this change must be found either in some already present factor of the situation as yet imperfectly realized or in the emergence of some new factor. We must take the former into account, for while there is need for action we can hold at arm's length torturing thoughts that hive back as soon as there is no more to be done. But Jesus' frequent resort to meditation and prayer, his counsel to "sit down and count the cost," place very strict limits upon this explanation. And there was, on the other

hand, a new and sinister element in the situation : Judas had betrayed his Master.

The records leave us to assume that the betrayal consisted only in enabling the authorities to effect an arrest in the absence of the multitude, which was as important to their purpose as it was to that of Jesus to avoid it. But it has been shown by Schweitzer (*The Quest of the Historical Jesus,* Eng. trs., pp. 394 ff.) that in all probability the more important item of his treachery was the secret that amongst his intimate followers Jesus had accepted the name of " Christ." The high priest's knowledge of the claim but inability to produce witness for it shows that he had obtained knowledge of it through one person only, who, since the law required two to establish fact, was not available as witness, and he was therefore reduced to the expedient of endeavouring to obtain a confession from the prisoner. There had therefore been one exception to the faithfulness with which the disciples had kept the entrusted secret of Jesus' Messiahship. But since in this matter Judas did not appear to the disciples as he did in the identification and arrest of Jesus, the latter act only was recorded.

If these were the facts of the betrayal we can understand its effect upon Jesus, for it not only enabled the authorities to seize him secretly and gave them a pretext for putting him to death, but it obscured the issue on which Jesus had resolved to die and enabled the authorities to avoid the dilemma he had placed before them

and to deal with him not as the reformer of a universally condemned abuse but as the very questionable claimant to the most august of all titles. It frustrated all that Jesus had hoped by his death to gain for his people, and through them for the world : it sealed the defeat of the larger scope of his intent. Jesus had seen the alternative of unfaithfulness and death and had committed himself to death in the intent to convert death into triumph, but now that hope was foiled and yet there was no retreat from the path he had taken : the old alternative revived, unfaithfulness or death, but now death and failure.

One of the greatest problems connected with the life of Jesus has been to understand the agony of Gethsemane and the desolation on the cross, and Christendom, owing to its theological presuppositions, has shrunk from the one natural and sufficient cause—his recognition that he had failed, had been denied and frustrated, in what was dearer to him than life. It has generally been taken for granted that Jesus died in the full assurance of winning by his death all for which he lived and died. The assumption involves a psychological impossibility : the man who dies knowing that his death will certainly win for him what is dearer to him than life dies happy in soul, however tormented in body.

If Jesus, convinced of its possibility, sought a national repentance, that through Israel he might make the love of God effective for the

remaking of the world and the speedy establishment of God's Kingdom on earth, then there was enough in the difference between the glory of that hope and the actuality of the world as it stood around the cross to break the heart of one who loved and hoped as Jesus did.

It is also often taken for granted that what actually followed in the history of the Church was what Jesus looked for and was satisfied to foresee. But here again theology overrides experience, for every true follower of his in every age has known that the Church does not fulfil the ideal of Jesus. And we must set the history of Christendom with its long periods of arrest, its Dark Ages, the degeneracy of the Church, the tale of bigotry and persecutions and religious wars, to mention but a few of its unchristly elements, alongside the possibility of Jesus' hope of a new world. And we have to remember that even the former was not certain to Jesus, for his followers had all left him and fled, and whether they would come back was uncertain and lay in those regions of human selfdetermination where one may hope, but where foreknowledge is impossible.

And it must be remembered that a certain minimum of hope deepens the agony of disappointment. If all hope is gone, then one may be stunned by despair: it is more painful to watch a still open possibility being bit by bit defeated by the selfish blindness of those one loves. An element of unrealized possibility

makes the contrast between what might be and what is all the sharper.

Probably an objection to the use of the word "failure" in connection with Jesus lies in a confusion of its two senses. To all men who set themselves to get God's will done in the world a double possibility of failure is open. They may fail through being unfaithful, and they may fail through the irresponsiveness of men, and failure in the latter is no indication of failure in the former sense. Rather, any man whose object lies, as does God's, in the moral life of man, must face the possibility of failure in the latter sense, for he is dealing with stuff that in the very nature of it cannot be controlled from without.

And the possibility of this failure is one of the severest conditions of the service of God: against hope his servants have to set loyalty to fact, and the contrast is painful. We must recognize that what the treachery of Judas effected was but finally to give actuality to a possibility that had long haunted the mind of Jesus. Between the parable of the sower, in which comparatively few failures stand out against general success, and the wistful question, "Howbeit when the Son of man cometh will he find faith on the earth?" lies a wide range of possibility putting a terrible strain on one who was at once loyal to God's love and man's freedom. We see these conflicting elements perhaps most tragically in the immediate following of the Lord's supper, with its great

implications, by the sorrowful insight of, "All ye shall be offended."

Failure is the surest test as to whether what a man is seeking is supremely dear to him or only of secondary interest. If, when a man fails in a quest, he can console himself elsewhere, then that quest was not his supreme concern. If, when foiled in his quest, nothing else on earth or in heaven can console him, then we know surely that the thing sought was of all things dearest to him and that there was no selfseeking in his quest. And here we should probably find one element of the experience that drew forth the cry, "My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me?" Jesus, foiled in his love for men, could not be comforted even with the fellowship of God. But we may think of another element. If Jesus' love for men was grounded in God's love and he was the supreme instrument of God's love, then, if he did not win response, God had no more that He could do to win man: his failure was God's failure: and for that which agonized his soul there could be no help in God but only a fellowship of sorrow with God that sealed the reality of his loss and the world's and God's.

XV

THE RESULTS OF JESUS' DEATH

THE world-crisis to which the work of Jesus was a response was reflected in his teaching as a swiftly oncoming vindication of God's kingship either by the experience that without his truth the social fabric must collapse or that with it human life should come to new birth. His death marked the rejection of God's truth by Israel and so the loss of its most promising channel for the world. And in so far as his death was a great rejection of the truth its result could not but be great evil for the world, which must be considered over against the good that resulted from his faithfulness unto death.

On the evil side the most striking and immediate result was the destruction of Israel in war with Rome. A forecast of this calamity appears in the recorded sayings of Jesus (Mark xiii. 7, 8, 14–20; Luke xiii. 3, xix. 41–44), and there is no reason to attribute the whole of these to post-eventum editings. No great penetration was needed in Jesus' day to see forces at work which, unless diverted, must end in conclusions with Rome. Jesus attempted to win the patriotism of Israel for

world service in God's truth and, this rejected, the natural alternative was a narrower and fiercer nationalism that could neither tolerate nor be tolerated by Rome.

A remoter but greater result was the break-up of the Roman Empire and the ensuing Dark Ages. Christianity spread neither swiftly enough nor in pure and intense enough form to kindle a spirit of devotion to the common good throughout the Empire that would have informed it with life and would by a more rapid and far-reaching evangelism have forestalled the barbarian invasions. And this result had a sinister and confusing reaction upon Christianity. It was not mere coincidence that the beginning of Christianity synchronized with the universal Empire of Rome: each, as we have seen, was the result of the development of different but interrelated elements of the same racial movement, and, however opposite in spirit those elements were, it remains true that a universal religion finds its natural counterpart and only fit setting in a World-State. Christianity is essentially a universal religion without national bonds or distinctions, and only such a religion could hold the mind of man at the level to which he had grown. But the dissolution of the Empire and the barbarian incursions flung the world back into a state of disintegration in which nationalism became a biological necessity. So that we have the anomaly of a civilization professing a religion in which national distinctions "cannot be" (to use Paul's phrase), and

living by a polity in which national distinctions are everything.

The general rejection of Jesus by Israel also reacted more immediately on those who adhered to him. Had the nation as a whole responded, the immense forces of Hebrew patriotism would have gone into Christianity: as it was, the Jewish followers of Jesus had this force against them, and what that antagonism meant we learn from Paul (Rom. ix. 1–5; 1 Thess. ii. 15, 16).

Another result of the same cause was that before long Christianity passed entirely from Jewish to Gentile adherents. Had this been otherwise as the result of a national acceptance of Jesus by the Jews, not only would the Christianizing of the Empire have been more rapid and thorough but Christianity would not have suffered as it did in quality. For in the first place the actual result of Jesus' work was, in view of the Church's reluctance to recognize his failure in any respect, transferred to his intent, and it came to be thought that his object was rather to snatch a few individuals out of the world than to establish God's Kingdom on earth. Consequently his teaching about the Kingdom of God becomes rapidly a dead language, and its place is taken by the doctrine of the Church.

Then, too, the original smallness of the Jewish element, and especially its rapid elimination, left Christianity too easily open to foreign influences. A larger and more permanent Hebrew element in the Church would have

offered more resistance to the sacramentalism of the mystery cults, the Greek metaphysics, the Roman legalism and institutionalism, and the thousand other influences which despiritualized the Church and paganized her worship. We should have less of all that in Christianity which we feel to-day estranges it from the sermon on the mount. A stronger element of the sturdy Hebrew democracy of James would have diminished the ecclesiastical ambitions that so soon betrayed the Church; and more of the Hebrew hold upon the oneness of religion and ethics would have saved the Church from a thousand shames and the world from a thousand wrongs. A less heathenishly degenerate Church in the East would have made an apostle of Mohammed, or at least would not have found itself at a disadvantage before a religion whose outstanding features were a passionate monotheism and a hatred of idols. Asceticism, which would not have thriven under Jewish influence, though partially justified by the conditions of the time, led to the dangerous notion of a double moral standard, and, more dangerously still, obscured and confused the relation of religion to the positive values of experience and so made religion unnatural and life suspect. And a stronger Hebrew spirit would have kept the Church from placing so great an emphasis upon creed with its attendant persecutions and tendency to place orthodoxy above good life.

But despite the smallness of its beginning and

all these attendant drawbacks, most of what is best in the world to-day and in the history of the last two thousand years comes through Christianity from Jesus. And perhaps more significant still is the present growing consciousness that without more of all that his name stands for the gains of science and wealth and organization are little more than an accumulation of social explosives.

When we come to consider this side of the count, the most definitely observable result of the death of Jesus upon his followers is their changed attitude towards the religious authorities of their people. Even in Galilee they had felt the gravity of the antagonism against Jesus and warned him of it: "Knowest thou not that the Pharisees were offended, when they heard this saying?" At Jerusalem they were dismayed at the forces arrayed against Jesus and left him alone. But in a few weeks we find them entirely free from the influence of Scribe and Pharisee and Priest (Acts iv. 19, 20; v. 29 ff.). The men who had crucified Jesus had lost prestige and power with his followers. We see in this what might easily have happened to the bulk of the nation had not the significance of Jesus' death been obscured by Judas' betrayal of the secret of his Messiahship. And it also shows that Jesus' death as an appeal to the nation was essential even for the liberation of the individual.

The change of attitude towards the authorities is, however, only a surface indication of a deeper change, deeper even than an access of courage,

in which Jews were never lacking where religion was concerned. And the way to the change lay through two experiences, the resurrection and Pentecost, following upon their experience of the death of Jesus.

We have come to recognize that the abnormal features of Pentecost—the appearance of flames and of the sound of rushing air and the "speaking with tongues"—are phenomena that appear from time to time under certain conditions of great religious pressure. They are in themselves significant chiefly of the type of mind and of the degree of intensity of common religious emotion in the community affected. Their real importance depends upon the nature of the religious truth in connection with which they appear.

We shall probably have to come to a somewhat similar conclusion with regard to the abnormal phenomena in the story of the resurrection, or rather in so much of it as remains after a comparison of the conflicting accounts preserved. We shall find it more consonant to piety, science and history to see in these appearances of Jesus the result or concomitant rather than the cause of the change of heart and life which in the disciples followed his death. Otherwise, if the resurrection appearances were really the foundation of the disciples' faith, then their religion depended upon just that sort of "sign" the demand for which Jesus refused to the Jews. And it is probable that insistence upon this element by the later Church has

helped to shift Christian life from its original foundations.

The chief significance of the resurrection to the first disciples was that it was God's seal to the Christhood of Jesus. But when we ask whether it was a spiritual or a physical resurrection that could do this, we begin to see that the appearances of Jesus are of secondary consideration. For an appearance after death in the case of any one else certainly would not have assured them that the person so appearing was the Messiah ; it could have happened only in the case of one whom they had acknowledged to be the Christ before he died. And when we turn back to the story of Cæsarea Philippi and listen to Peter's affirmation, "Thou art the Christ," and Jesus' estimate of its worth, we wonder what more than this spiritual assurance could be needed. But we find that the resurrection is repeatedly spoken of as God's reply to the Jews' rejection and killing of Jesus (Acts ii. 23, 24 ; iii. 13–15 ; iv. 10.; v. 30, 31 ; x. 39, 40), and Peter's rebuke of Jesus' prediction of suffering (Mark viii. 32) warns us that when the disciples first acknowledged Jesus as the Christ, they were not prepared to see God's final agent in one who was to be rejected and killed, so that the resurrection became to them the proof that Jesus was the Christ despite these experiences. The shock of Jesus' death was so great to them because it struck down many of the notions on which they had supported their confession of his Messiahship. Jesus saw the

spiritual core of the confession, but his quick following rebuke of Peter and the constant misunderstanding of him by the disciples shows the presence of much in their conviction that was alien to his mind. His death compelled them to choose between these alien elements with their accompaniments of political or miraculous glory for Jesus and place and power for themselves on the one hand and on the other the essential core of the power of an unselfish love, God's and man's. Now this enthronement of utterly self-giving love, this resurrection of Jesus in the heart, must in the very nature of the case be in its own right : if it depends upon an exhibition of divine power then it is power and not love that is really supreme. But, gaining supremacy in its own right, it brings the conviction that it is supreme in the universe ; so that the appearances that express outwardly a relationship between the death of Jesus and the power of God (as the resurrection appearances were taken to do) must necessarily be secondary to, and depend upon, and in the deepest sense be the result of, his inward and spiritual resurrection in the triumph of his suffering love in the heart.

This conclusion lessens our concern as to the exact nature of the resurrection appearances. If the records were put before a joint board of historians and scientists, and they found after eliminating the contradictory material they could accept the remainder as a trustworthy tradition of an account honestly given by men of what they experienced, they would have to confess

that, in view of what we know of the possibility of tactual no less than visual, and corporate no less than individual hallucination, they would be unable to decide whether the appearances were objective or subjective, but the fact that Paul, who gives us our earliest written witness, places his own experience on the same footing as that of the rest (1 Cor. xv. 8) would incline them to the latter alternative.

It has been contended that the depressed state of the eleven would not be a condition favourable to such a vision, but depression is probably the most fruitful soil for phenomena of the kind, which do not necessarily take their feeling tone from the conscious state of the experient. Rather the eleven, as we have seen, were just in that state of divided mind that is capable of resulting in a change of conscious life so sudden and great as to be not infrequently accompanied by the psychologically abnormal. As in the case of Paul, there was a sudden shifting over from one standpoint of life to another, whose elements had been gradually accumulating on the outskirts of consciousness. Up to the death of Jesus they had looked for their faithful following of him to bring them glory (Mark ix. 34; x. 37; Luke xxii. 24): they considered that they merited recompense from God (Mark x. 28; cf. Matt. xix. 27): that is, the centre of their conscious life was selfconcern and selfrighteousness. But to Jesus the true centre of human life was the opposite—the love and goodness of God; and the impressiveness of his personality

won these things more and more place in their lives : they remembered his teaching, which shows that they partly understood it and felt its force. At Cæsarea Philippi their partial understanding and spontaneous appreciation of Jesus' way of life spoke in their confession of his Messiahship and was hailed by Jesus with gladness (Matt. xvi. 17), but the conscious centre of their practical calculations is seen in Peter's repudiation of the thought of suffering (v. 22). And the death of Jesus placed the disciples in the necessity of either disowning him or coming over consciously to the standpoint of life which his death made indubitably clear. Now their despondency was caused partly by the disappointment of those hopes that belonged to the self-concerned centre of their life, and partly by a real but uncomprehending sympathy with Jesus' suffering and sorrow and a sense of shame at the part they had played in it : to accept Jesus' standpoint was to be lifted above selfconcern and to identify their concern with his ; but it was also, through the utterness of love evinced by his death, to experience his triumph over all that opposed his purpose in them, and so, as far as they were concerned, to convert the deadly bitterness of his failure to a joyful fellowship with him in triumph. And even if we take the appearances as objective, we must suppose the priority of this spiritual resurrection in the changed hearts of his followers to account for the change from the sorrow of Gethsemane and the desolation of the Cross to the triumphant and peace-im-

parting presence of the narratives. On the other hand, we must not let their subjectivity suggest deceptiveness: they embodied the truth that Jesus lived and was with his followers in a truer spiritual fellowship than they had ever known.

This consideration has already taken us far on the way to understanding the other two outstanding features of the change. In the early preaching of the apostles the significance of the death of Jesus was given in two possibilities, the remission of sins and the reception of the Holy Spirit (Acts ii. 38; iii. 19; v. 31, 32; x. 43, 44), and both were evidently drawn from their own experience. With regard to the former, as we have seen, up to the time of Jesus' death they had small sense of their own demerit. In their desertion of him they discovered, beneath what seemed to them tolerable similarity, an absolute difference between his utter devotion and their selfcare; and when they saw in him, suffering and dying, the Christ, the final interpreter and agent of God, they saw in his death what their selfishness was to God, and discovered in God a love that suffered rather than abandon its ideal of them, and could therefore, despite their sin, give them back their "better selves." Thus they experienced that God in Jesus could "give repentance to Israel and remission of sins" (Acts v. 31).

One of the visible marks of the early followers of Jesus was a joyful, quickened, triumphant life. The slow of heart became men with "the

mind of Christ": the feeble of faith, men of conviction that fire could not burn nor steel hew out of them. Sometimes this showed itself in psychologically abnormal ways, which in Hebrew fashion were regarded as especially the work of the Spirit of God. Paul, following probably a sounder aspect of Hebrew thought, of which we have a trace in the teaching of Jesus (Mark xiii. 11), saw in all distinctively Christian life the work of the Spirit of God, and placed the abnormal on the lower levels of this activity.

Now if the line of thought we have taken in these essays is right, then the passage from the selfconcerned standpoint to that from which Jesus lived and which his death, by revealing it to be God's standpoint too, made possible for others, would naturally have marked consequences. The personality would be unified under the only interest capable of subsuming and elaborating all the highest and most expansive of our hereditary instincts, and of bringing man into hearty fellowship with his kind. And since that which lifts man above the standpoint of self-interest brings him into fellowship and co-operation with the universal and divine, we should find the personality growing in inward unity and in power by a growing consciousness of the presence and power of God in life.

And again we see how necessary for the sake of the individual was the national and universal aim of the death of Jesus. If we try to imagine how Jesus could, in dealing only with individuals

as such, have brought them to such a spiritual choice as the actual conditions of his death made them face, we shall conclude that it would have been impossible, and that Jesus could challenge the individual with his whole truth only by challenging the whole society of which the individual was a member. Without its national significance Jesus' death would have lacked the depth of its power on the individual. Without its world aim it could not have presented the true antagonism to selfconcern ; if his love had been to his followers only and the aim of his death confined to their good, it would clearly only have confirmed their selfpreference.

XVI

THE MEANING OF THE DEATH OF JESUS

FOR two thousand years the most constant and urgent task of Christian thinking has been to find such a rational expression of men's experience of the power of the death of Jesus as shall make it intelligible, and therefore greater in themselves and shall facilitate its participation by others. And Christian thought has here been unstable with a frequency and to a degree unparalleled in any other branch of theology, the tenets of one age again and again appearing grotesque and repugnant to the age that follows. This is the more remarkable as the survey of the results of Jesus' death have shown how close a review of its historical circumstances brings us to a discernment of its universal significance.

The actual course of theology was determined by two already noted factors, the rapid transference of Christianity out of Israel to the Gentiles, involving an abandonment of the historic view-point of Israel for others—the sacramental, metaphysical, institutional, legal—each with its own presuppositions ; and the unwillingness to own explicitly that Jesus had in any sense of the word failed, and therefore the inability to make

simple use of the historic conditions of his death in the attempt to discover its universal elements. As a result, practically all the theories of the death of Jesus have insisted that its essential significance was in presuppositions and relationships that would certainly not be suspected by any one reading the story of his life and death ; which in turn makes us suspect the validity of their starting-points.

The commonest of modern theories, though now obsolescent, starts from the assertion that God must punish sin and can therefore pardon men only if some one bears their punishment. There is, of course, no scrap of evidence in the Bible that God cannot forgive sin without punishing some one for it ; and any support to be found in the moral consciousness of mankind would add that God must punish sin in the person of the sinner, and would rule out vicarious punishment as unjust. But in any case the basis itself is inherently inadequate, for it presupposes that when the sinner suffers God is satisfied ; but if the heart of God finds satisfaction in seeing the sinner suffer, then He is not a God of love. So that to make this assertion the starting-point of a doctrine of grace is to lay down premisses that deny the conclusion.

A similar inconsequence appears in the attempt to explain that Jesus saves us through his death by offering to God in our stead a perfect penitence with his sinlessness made possible, and of which by faith we may partake. For penitence is not a sorrow for the sin of others, but for

our own ; so that Jesus' feeling about sin was certainly not the highest possible degree of what God expects the sinner to feel about his own sin. And sorrow for the sin of others would not be acceptable to God if He Himself did not feel it in the highest degree, so that, even if it is a condition of man's salvation that some one should experience perfect sorrow for sin in this sense, Jesus is superfluous.

Another theory of the death of Jesus explains it as the supreme manifestation of God's love. Undoubtedly it is this, but if we attempt to see it so apart from the concrete historical conditions we have a sentimental disregard of an essential factor that justifies the charge of making light of sin. A man by giving his life for another shows the depth and proves the reality of his love, but if he goes to his death for no other purpose than to show his love it is sentiment demented. Suffering and death show love wholesomely only when they are incurred in seeking some other good for the one loved than love's manifestation, which can thus only be a by-product of any sane purpose that involves them. So that such a theory is radically deficient for lack of specifying this other good to obtain which for us Jesus died, and thereby made known his love and God's.

We must return to the historic point of view, which was Jesus' own, and seek to find what was essential in the concrete conditions of his death. We have found that we cannot reconstruct those conditions without seeing the relation-

ship of the life and death of Jesus to the whole history of the world, past and future. The story itself indicated its universal sense and went far to make the experience of the human soul under its influence intelligible and capable of statement to others.

One or two points, however, need a little further treatment, partly because in tracing the actual circumstances of the death of Jesus certain elements of its larger framework lacked due emphasis, and partly because our abstract method of thinking makes it hard for us to recognize universal truth in a concrete event, and especially to recognize that it has thus its purest and fullest expression.

Some may check at the thought that Jesus chose to lay down his life in challenge to the Jewish authorities on the state of the Outer Court of the Temple. We have seen the national and world significance of this act, but it is necessary to note too that its very particularity is of value, for it is a law of life that general goodwill must, to be effective, concentrate upon the particular : a great part of its service is to discover the most important particular ; and not until it comes to the particular does it come also to issue with the opposition.

To give the story of the death of Jesus its full and true setting we must recall the main movement of human development—the growth of intellect that compelled man to ask " why " about his conduct, and to organize his interests inwardly—the temptation to make selfinterest the

supreme unifying principle of action—the lack of a thought of God high enough to support a life for the common good, especially in face of instances of the opposite—the threat to the social fabric and to the highest human activities by growing selfinterest. We saw development around the eastern Mediterranean reaching a certain point and then waiting in peril for a thought of God that would enable men to live unselfishly in a selfish world, and to begin to do so despite their prior implication in its selfishness. Jesus had, and knew that he had, the thought of God that could meet the world's need, a truth on which man could grow to the stature of the divine ideal ; and in his death we see God's love and purpose in him dealing with, and revealing itself against, all the self-preference that opposed it.

The inclusion of all that opposes God under the term of selfishness or selfpreference may be queried. But we must not forget that sin is properly not the disordered life, but the wrongly ordered life. The disordered life is, of course, contrary to the human need for inward unification, but it may be disordered for lack of power of intellectual or emotional continuity, and be therefore rather non-moral than immoral. It becomes blameworthy only when it contains elements of selfwill and disregard for others, i.e., when it is more or less deliberately chosen as a means of selfgratification, which is thus exalted into an ordering principle of life, i.e., the disordered life is morally wrong only in so far

as it contains elements of wrong order : the morally worst lives are those that are most effectively ordered on a wrong basis. Hence Jesus found less obstacle amongst the publicans and sinners than amongst the respectable. And in the conscious ordering of life the choice is ultimately between selfinterest of one sort or another and the larger good.

In the issue between Jesus and human selfishness there were, we saw, two clearly distinguishable sides to his suffering, neither of which can be understood apart from the object of his endeavour and the faith and love that moved him. He laid down his life to destroy the outstanding obstacle to his purpose ; and he died killed by the agony of failing to win man to his will.

Behind the endeavour of his life and the venture of his death lay a conviction of the greatness of human possibilities : the world might truly be God's Kingdom, and that speedily. But as the protagonist of the Kingdom of God he must deal with the things that oppose it. In turning to do so he was careful that the twelve should recognize him as the Christ, the supreme representative and agent of God, but as careful that this should be hidden from the people ; the significance of which seems to be that men must first honestly distinguish between right and wrong before they can understand God's way of dealing with the latter : moral honesty must precede spiritual apprehension.

The significance of the issue lay not only in

what Jesus opposed, but in the way in which he opposed it. This it was that first dismayed his followers and then remade them. He, acting for God, met the opposition of man's selfishness not by a stroke of power, but by suffering. The chief priests' fear of the people disproves the suggestion that under the circumstances resistance would have been useless. His choice of suffering rather than forcible resistance was the counterpart of his choice of the appeal of truth in its recognition that the only appeal worth making is to man's free will, and it thus made clear that the deepest reaction of God's heart to human sin was not punishment, but accepted suffering. It thus implied that God loves man with a love that has no reserve of selfconcern, and, though this is not given so explicitly as in the experience of failure, we have sufficient to answer the question, If failure is the final test of love, what would have happened had Jesus' death done what he hoped? If his death had had its intended effect, men would have found in the manner of it that which, because his intent was frustrated, became indubitable only in the killing sense of failure. Jesus went to the Cross in defence of God's ideal of men against what men had chosen to be: the agony that killed him was the comment of his love upon the chasm between what he knew man might be and what he saw man making of himself: his heart broke because he would be loyal both to the love of God and the facts of life.

If we are right in seeing a divine activity

in all that lifts man above selfinterest, and right also in our estimate of the place of Jesus in history, then in a uniquely complete and intimate sense God was in the suffering of Jesus. We have seen that we must think of God as working under limitations that make both love and suffering possible to Him. And all that Jesus was makes us sure that in his agony of heart on the cross we see what God's love felt at measuring the distance between what man might be and was. In Jesus, God had at length found one who could express Him truly to men, and at the cross He saw the world turning away from a revelation and appeal beyond which there was no possibility of going ; and if His love finds measure in the love of Jesus, so must His sorrow in Jesus' sorrow ; for Jesus' failure was God's failure. The future, if God foresaw it, was little more than a mockery of the possibility lost, and the future depended upon that human freedom in giving which God has limited His prevision—and at the Cross the whole world had turned away from Jesus or against him. So God partook the cup of suffering and failure that His fellowship had brought to Jesus and gave the last proof love can give of its depth and purity.

It is sometimes said, and truly, that the love of God must always suffer in the presence of man's sin, and this, it is stated, is the true atonement. But we know the nature and meaning, and feel the power of God's sorrow at human sin truly and fully only when we inter-

pret it by the suffering of Jesus ; and we can never know it so completely elsewhere, for his followers came to see the meaning of his death and to enthrone God's love in their hearts, and the train of his triumph has grown through the ages, so that never again has the opposition of the world to God been so unbroken as at Calvary. The death of Jesus was thus something more than a revelation in time of what eternally is : it was an experience of God in His relation to man, unique and uniquely significant. For if the deepest reality of all that is highest in human life is that it is a co-operation with the divine, then that fellowship must be an event for God as well as for man. And the unparalleled faithfulness of Jesus must have given God a unique opportunity, which found its climax in His fellowship with Jesus in the experience of opposition. Here, as elsewhere, revelation of God is not to be had without something more than revelation : the death of Jesus was a unique revelation of God, and was so because it was more—an experience, an unrepeatable experience on the part of God.

And the power of the death of Jesus to meet the needs of personality follows simply from what we have seen. If the deepest Reality of the universe is the utterly unselfish love that the death of Jesus shows, then human personality finds in fellowship with such a God both its highest good and one that realizes itself in all true human activities, and so gathers into itself and enhances all the essentially human interests :

for in lifting the soul above selfinterest God's love binds it to the interests of His Kingdom, and so to the duty of realizing the maximum of human values.

And in providing a rational base for a life of service it does more. Over against the selfish tendencies of men is set the unbounded love of God, which is the more compelling in that it reaches us through the love of Jesus. If Jesus went to his death in a world-attempt, and if the sorrow of his death was the measure of the love behind the attempt, then it is simply true that "He died for me;" nor is the demand this makes on our loyalty less because he died for all. For he could not die for my highest good without dying for all. A man may save my body by dying for me alone: he cannot save my soul by his death unless it has a wider scope and touches the things that are common to all.

It gives man back his better self despite his actual selfcommittal to the lower. For the sorrow that failure brought to Jesus and God depends upon God's holding His ideal of man in spite of what He knows man to be. Despite my selfish perversion of my being, God's ideal of me still lives in the pain of that love which is the Eternal Reality, and so His ideal of me is even more real than what I have made of myself. The memory of my sin is by the fires of God's pain continuously transformed to hope as I accept what I see of Him in Jesus' death, and so accept His thought of me.

And with a love of God that can overcome

the selfishness in a man comes that which enables him to live for something more than selfinterest in a world of selfish men. It sets him the duty and inspires him with the hope of overcoming the world for God.

XVII

THE PERSON OF JESUS

(1) THEORIES ANCIENT AND MODERN

If the discussions and creeds of the early Church leave us cold it is because their thought-construction had to start from premisses and to use materials that are not upon the thought-market to-day. But the interest at stake was great, for it concerned an answer to the question, Was the goodness, the character, the purpose that his followers saw in Jesus really fundamental in the very being of God?

A contemplation of the life of Jesus must have a revolutionary reaction upon a man's idea of life, of the universe, of God. He cannot but conclude, If God is not like this man, then this man is better than God; if this goodness is not nearer to the Reality at the heart of the world's appearances, then the better a man becomes the more unreal he becomes, and Jesus was less true to the realities of life than Caiaphas.

But if we see in Jesus a true revelation of God we find another problem. For in view of his historical position, of his claim to stand beyond the highest level of the past (Matt. xi. 11;

Luke vii. 28), and of his claim to Messiahship, we have to say that if Jesus' revelation of God was true, it was uniquely supreme ; and, of course, the common conviction of Christendom assents.

But the conviction of Christendom goes further. It has the assurance that there never will be another such as he, that he is unique, not only in fact, but essentially. Of course, the existence of such a conviction does not prove its truth, but it has this much corroboration that, had Jesus contemplated (as the Baptist did) the possibility of a greater than he following to complete what he attempted, his whole attitude especially towards his death would have been different : it would have meant that in him God had not made His highest bid for the heart of man.

The power and significance of Jesus for religion depend in the first place upon the reliability of the revelation of God in him, which itself, in view of the peculiar nature of its contents, depends upon his uniqueness. The problem of the person of Jesus is, therefore, to give an intelligible account of his revelational reliability and therefore of his uniqueness, i.e., to see them in relationship with the rest of our experience.

Of the various attempts made to solve the problem, our concern is only with the Biblical and the more modern. The former divide themselves into two classes, the one represented by the Matthæan birth story and the other by the later Pauline Epistles, the Epistle to the Hebrews

and the Johannine writings. These two accounts seem mutually exclusive since, according to the former, Jesus began to be as the child of the Virgin Mary and the Holy Spirit, while according to the latter he was the incarnation of a pre-existent being. The frequency with which the latter appears in the New Testament reflects upon the historicity of the former, for though minds accustomed to look on both as divinely authenticated may ignore their incongruity, this could hardly have happened at a time when neither was regarded as "scripture," which suggests that in the most important centres of the early Church the former was either not known or not accepted. And there are positive indications that this was so. Paul's writings are not only without any hint that he was acquainted with the story of the virgin birth, but one of his most carefully worded passages on the person of Jesus (Romans i. 3) speaks of him as "born of the seed of David according to the flesh," which certainly does not suggest a miraculous origin, especially in view of the fact that (to judge from the evidence of the first and third Gospels) the only genealogies of Jesus available to the early Church traced his Davidic descent through Joseph. And in the fourth Gospel the coming of Jesus is told (i. 14) without any suggestion of a virgin birth, and Philip is made to speak of "Jesus the son of Joseph" (i. 45) without comment from an evangelist who is elsewhere at pains to correct or forestall possible misconceptions (ii. 21; vi. 71; xii. 6).

Our oldest sources, Mark and the non-Marcan source common to the first and third Gospels, have no hint of a miraculous birth, and if this is said to be because they have no occasion to refer to Jesus' birth at all, it still remains that the historicity or otherwise of the birth story would put a different complexion upon such an incident as Mark iii. 31–35.

When we come to ask for the positive evidence we find that it is explicit in the first Gospel only. The third is usually claimed in support, and Luke i. 34, 35 may certainly be read in this sense, but they are not explicit, and the possibility of taking them otherwise is supported by the following facts: that immediately preceding these verses the angel says, "The Lord God will give him the throne of David his father" and that in iii. 23–31 his descent from David is traced through Joseph: that Joseph and Mary are spoken of as "his parents" (ii. 41, 43), and Mary speaks of Joseph as "thy father" (ii. 48): that if the evangelist intended to recount a miraculous birth then he makes Jesus, in leaving the Nazarenes' question, "Is not this Joseph's son?" (iv. 22) unanswered, withhold a fact without which they were hardly to blame for misunderstanding the situation. In view of these facts it is difficult to think that the third evangelist did not believe Jesus to be the son of Joseph.

In turning to Matthew we must remember that the Gospel that bears that name is now generally recognized as a composite work that

may have certain elements due to the publican, who, however, was not responsible for its present form, nor for a great part of its material, including the first two chapters. There we read, "Now all this happened, that there might be fulfilled what was spoken by the Lord through the prophet saying, Behold, a virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall call his name Immanuel." And it is now common knowledge that Isaiah's Hebrew word, which in the evangelist's Greek is translated "virgin," meant any young woman of marriageable age, whether virgin or not, and that Isaiah did not intend his words to imply a virgin birth. So that what the evangelist gives as the *raison d'être* of the virgin birth depends upon a mistaken understanding of prophecy, due probably to the use of a Greek translation of the Old Testament. Beside this we can place another very illuminating mistake of a similar kind. In the first and fourth Gospels the entry of Jesus to Jerusalem is connected with Zech. ix. 9, "Behold, thy King cometh . . . riding upon an ass, even (A.V. has "and") upon a colt the foal of an ass," where our R.V. correctly interprets the Hebrew parallelism to refer to one beast only, but where the evangelist's Greek translation (like our A.V.) suggests two beasts; and he differs from the other evangelists in telling us that not only were there actually two beasts, but that the disciples laid garments and that Jesus rode upon both of them, though the latter absurdity is masked in the R.V. by giving

the ambiguous "thereon" for the unambiguous Greek "on them." And if in the twenty-first chapter of Matthew we have history modified in accordance with mistaken prophecy, why not in the first chapter?

For convenience' sake we have spoken of these mistakes as the work of the evangelist, but they more probably belonged to the tradition which he used and which came to him through those, and they were many, to whom prophecy was previsioned history. This is the more likely in view of the approach of the first two chapters to a legendary style, their action turning on no less than four dream communications. And we have what is often found where the miraculous is emphasized—a withdrawal of emphasis from the ethical. For Mary does not do her bounden duty as an honest woman and inform Joseph of her condition, and this breach of obligation is practically condoned by the divine message that follows his discovery of it. Is it less honouring to Jesus to think of him as the son of an honest man and woman than as the result of a miraculous event whose first effect upon the woman to whom it happened was a very culpable lack of frankness towards a good man to whom she stood in one of the most sacred relations of life?

It is a thankless and, to-day, mostly a stale task to canvass the historicity of a story endeared to Christendom by many associations, but is necessary in view of the fact that the virgin birth is an item in the creed of the larger part

of Christendom to-day, and is responsible for the common thought of Jesus as neither wholly divine nor wholly human (certainly not the latter) but part of each, so that one can say, "Here we see his humanity and there his divinity," with the result that where he is most human and therefore most intelligible and moving he has been made least significant of God.

The modern acceptance of the story is often defended on the plea that the life of Jesus, being a moral miracle, demands a miraculous origin. But this depends upon a confusion of sense, for the moral miracle spoken of is an unbroken abiding by the moral law, whereas the miraculous origin asked for is an over-riding of natural law. And the plea thus rests upon the assumption that the moral law cannot be kept without breaking the natural.

A second plea is that Jesus was sinless and could not have been so with our tainted heritage. This, of course, assumes either that Mary and all her ancestors were sinless or that the taint is transmitted through the male parent only. But the heart of the fallacy is that it attempts to explain the moral greatness of Jesus by explaining it away. It says, "He was so much better than others that it must have been easier." Here is one who in the long and weary race of life comes in so far ahead of all competitors that you say, "Such excellent running is too good to be that of merely human limbs: he must have had a lift on the way." Do you honour the runner so?

In passing to the doctrine of pre-existence we must bear in mind that those who hold it to-day along with belief in the virgin birth do by implication deny the historicity of the Matthæan story at the crucial point, by affirming that Jesus was not the son of Mary and the Holy Spirit, but was in reality a Being who had pre-existed in eternal co-existence with the Spirit.

The doctrine of the pre-existence of Christ was taken over from the New Testament writers by the early Church practically without question, the centre of discussion being the relation of the pre-existent Christ to God the Father. But to-day the doctrine causes difficulty. The greater definiteness of thought about personality makes it more and more difficult for us to think that a truly human personality can have pre-existed as a divine person. It would preclude the possibility of sin, and therefore make choice and temptation unreal and a truly human character impossible. The result is that the majority of Christian people trained under this creed do not regard Jesus as a man at all in the essential sense of being a human personality, but as a God in a human body.

With the thinkers of the New Testament the doctrine did not have these disadvantages, partly because the memory of Jesus was too fresh in the world and partly because in the thought of the old world the conception of personality had been little defined and explored, and thinkers passed easily from a principle to a person and vice versa, the genders of abstract nouns

assisting. We feel this in reading the opening verses of the Fourth Gospel. Theologians insist that "the Word" was intended by the writer as a person, but there is no more evidence for this than that the writer of Proverbs viii., in speaking as he does of Wisdom, was thinking of her as a person. And the great declaration "The Word became flesh" could hardly have been worded as it is if it had not drawn both its terms from a vocabulary in which personality had no distinct place.

It seems doubtful, therefore, whether these thinkers of the New Testament, despite the way in which their language reads to us, were not, when they spoke of pre-existence, thinking rather of a principle than a person. Had they written to-day they might quite probably have used the former term rather than language suggesting the latter, which was imposed upon them by the thought of their time. The thoughtful man, both Jew and Greek, tended more and more to think of God as absolute perfection and greatness. He found it difficult to think how God should need anything outside Himself, and therefore why He should bring the world into being or how He could work in it, particularly in view of its imperfections. He could not think of God as directly creating and controlling the world, but, since the world must be somehow connected with Him, it was regarded as the work of a being near but secondary to Him. And since this Second Being was God's creative and controlling power in the world, in him also was all that

man might know of God. Now if we imagine Paul, with his experience of Jesus as the revelation of God and as the creative power of God remaking his life, preaching Jesus Christ and being met by a partial appreciation and acknowledgement that in Jesus Christ we might doubtless learn something of God and that something of God was active in him, but that we can never be sure and safe until we know the great intermediary Being, Æon or Archangel, Logos or Wisdom, through whom God made the worlds and in whom alone He expresses all that man may know of Him, we see that Paul would be compelled to reply, "He of whom you speak has come in human likeness and it is Jesus Christ." And the regular conjunction of the pre-existence of Christ with the ascription of agency in creation (John i. 3; Col. i. 16; Heb. i. 2) suggests such an origin as this. The thought would be furthered by the haziness of the Jewish distinction between pre-existence in actuality and pre-existence in the mind of God and by the consequent Jewish belief in a pre-existent Messiah.

Now one of the most marked elements of the teaching of Jesus, that of God's nearness to His world—made possible by his revision of greatness—removes the *raison d'être* of an Intermediary Being and with it the system of thought which the doctrine of his pre-existence was shaped and needed to fit. At the same time that doctrine has become increasingly difficult as the result of Jesus' teaching as to the importance

and significance of personal life, leading to definiteness of thought about personality.

The doctrine served the need of its day, but it is altogether doubtful whether the New Testament writers thought of Jesus as a personal continuity of experience with a pre-existent divine Being, and modern theologians who insist that they did so must accept the responsibility. For it makes it practically impossible to think of Jesus as truly human, and the true humanity of Jesus must at all costs be maintained. In this matter an older line of theology has been forced to general retreat. For the old idea of an omniscient and omnipotent Jesus reduced his whole life to posture and pretence. So that at least these have been generally abandoned and certain limits to his knowledge and power have been accepted. But it is not yet adequately seen that any idea of pre-existence makes life for Jesus a radically different thing from what it is to us, and just so far puts him out of vital and helpful fellowship with us. Jack London, in *The People of the Abyss,* tells us how he sewed a sovereign in his vest, put on ragged clothes and went to investigate East London poverty. He makes friends with two unemployed, but at a certain point when hunger pressed he produced the sovereign, and "I had to explain. . . . And at once they shut up like clams. I was not of their kind." So any theory of the person of Jesus that gives him superhuman advantage in life shuts upon him the door to the inmost recesses of our need. This

radical incompatibility and its seriousness are evident in the shifts to which modern theologians are put to make the doctrine of pre-existence compatible with a true humanity in Jesus.

One of the most popular of these attempts bases itself upon a passage in which Paul is supposed to commit himself explicitly to the doctrine of personal pre-existence (Phil. ii. 5–11), the so-called "Kenosis" passage, and suggests that we should think of the pre-existent Christ as having, by an act of self-emptying (interpreted as relinquishing certain divine attributes) become the truly human personality of Jesus. But it is not at all certain that Paul, by "being in the form of God," means pre-existence, for it would be unnatural to speak of a Being who was actually enjoying equality with God as not counting equality with God a thing to be snatched at, or to say of a being who was God "wherefore also God highly exalted him." Could Paul have spoken of Jesus as God self-emptied in face of his confession "in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily" (Col. ii. 9)? And the latter expression warns us that even if Paul in Phil. ii. was referring to pre-existence, he was making a figurative use of it, which it is unwise to press as though it was intended for exact thought. In any case it is quite gratuitous to suppose that by subtracting certain things from Godhead you arrive at humanity: diminished divinity is more probably even further from the human.

But the main objection to this as to all pre-

existence theories is twofold—they do not allow a true humanity to Jesus, and they do not account for his uniqueness.

To the question, Could Jesus sin? they must all answer, No. And therefore they must give the same answer to the question, Was he really tempted? which introduces a repugnant element of unreality into his life, and leaves him without a human moral consciousness. How hard the difficulty presses those who take this position appears in the suggested solution that Jesus could not sin, but did not know that he could not, which, of course, is to say that the moral consciousness of Jesus was at this most important of all points untrustworthy and deceptive.

Another question must be put. "Was memory continuous between the two states?" If not, how can we speak of the same person, for by all that the words mean to us in sane life continuity of personality depends upon continuity of memory. And if memory was continuous from the one state to the other, does it not again mean that Jesus went through life on quite other conditions to ours, for to a man who remembers himself to be God life is an entirely different thing from what it is to those who have not this memory. An attempt has been made to solve the difficulty by suggesting that Jesus was consciously human but subconsciously divine. But this would be to put his consciousness out of touch with the most important reality of his being, and to say that so far as he was conscious of himself that consciousness was radically

wrong : he thought himself man while he was really God.

In fact such are the difficulties on the score of human personality that another school of thinkers has frankly given up the attempt to defend the human personality of Jesus, claiming for him only an impersonal manhood. This is supported on the assertion that human personality is an imperfect copy of the divine, and that therefore God in human form would be perfect and true man, though retaining the divine personality in its completeness. Here, of course, there cannot be even the pretence of explaining how we can think of Jesus as really tempted. But man is not an imperfect God, but a being whose perfection lies in a perfect relationship of subservience and obedience to, and fellowship with, God : the personality of God and man are reciprocal, not interchangeable, an essential element of the latter being a creaturely and child-like dependence on the former.

And all pre-existence theories fail completely to account for the uniqueness of Jesus. For if in one age or place God could so enter human life (and this applies equally to the virgin birth) there is no reason why this should be done only once. Why not in every age and every race?

XVIII

THE PERSON OF JESUS

(2) HIS DIVINITY AND UNIQUENESS

In the first of these essays we saw that we can know nothing of God unless life brings us the possibility of an inward experience of Him independent of any knowledge of Him that comes from without: that we have this experience wherever in love of the beautiful, in loyalty to truth and right and love, we rise above self-interest: that these are the characteristically human experiences lifting man above the brute and achieving personality; and that thus the deepest experience of life, upon which all its values depend, is that the most truly human in us is a concurrence of the human and divine, an in-working of God. It is only putting this in other words to say that all that is truly human is an entering of God into humanity, which, since it is the great good to which our whole being, the universe and all we know of it, urge us, we must interpret as the disclosure of God's intent to incarnate Himself in man: for this He accepts the selflimitation which allows man to be free, that man may know the dignity of the most

intimate co-operation and fellowship with Him, and that He may know the joy of the completest selfgiving.

But with the great and very sure experience of divine inworking comes the sorrowful confession that it is only a partial, occasional experience, and, worse, that much of our activity and life contravenes the Universal Will, bringing inner discord and stunting our stature. And this we are conscious is partly our individual fault, but partly because we are heavily handicapped by a heritage and environment of physical and social evil. So that men, as we know them, are incarnations of God curtailed, thwarted, perverted by individual and corporate refusal of His will, and are by this refusal withheld from attaining more than a curtailed, thwarted, perverted humanity.

All this brings us to conclude that a whole man, without inward contradictions, with nothing of the beast or of pretence in him, will be one whose life finds its wholeness in a complete response to God. He will find in God the environment in which his soul attains its full human stature. God will be in him, not as a man is in his clothes, but as a composer's music is in the work of the perfect instrumentalist. And the difference between us and such a man would be that he would be whole man and mere man, while ours is a fractional and adulterated manhood.

Such a man we see in Jesus. His whole outlook and activity are above the level of self-

interest. He shows complete inward oneness and wholeheartedness : he is himself entirely in every word and deed. All the strain and uncertainty that we see in him come from the nature of the material with which he dealt, and not from inner discord. And it confirms our recognition of a divine element in all that is truly human to find that with and in his perfect humanity is an unbroken and vivid consciousness of the fellowship of God. Life to him was a continuous response to God : its whole business was the doing of God's will and the accomplishment of His purpose.

So that by all we rely on in our moral consciousness and by the very possibility of our knowing anything of God at all, and by the confirmation that both these have in Jesus, we see in him one who in every element of his being was essentially inseparable from God. And the sureness and completeness of his revelation and representation of God is achieved, not by the merging of his personality in God, but by his free acceptance and willed maintenance of personal fellowship with God. The sureness of what we learn of God in him depends upon the purity and completeness of his goodness as a man, and so upon the reality of his human relationship to God. We see here the absolute necessity for maintaining at all costs the real humanity of Jesus, as otherwise his revelation of God loses all validity and point, for it becomes alien and unintelligible to the divine within us, which is known only in the truly human.

We are so brought to see God uniquely, wholly, perfectly in Jesus. But our thought takes us further. If God limited Himself that man might be, and if of all men Jesus alone afforded God all that He sought by His selflimitation, then we are compelled to say that in Jesus God is Himself as not elsewhere in the universe. And recognizing that the universe in which Jesus was born is of the substance of God, but that in it all God is either limited or misunderstood except in Jesus—who was the exception because he achieved God's ideal of manhood—we can say that Jesus, just because he was whole man and mere man, was very God. The danger of calling Jesus God is that it is likely to dishonour him by making people forget his true manhood, and so also to dishonour God by helping them to ignore that through which alone we know Him truly.

The foregoing has assumed the actual moral and spiritual uniqueness of Jesus, but we have seen that the validity of his work and the consciousness of Christendom demand to see him also as essentially unique. But essential uniqueness implies a peculiar place in an ordered whole, the uniqueness of the key-stone in the arch, of the centre in the circle. So that nothing can satisfy this demand except to see Jesus as occupying a unique place in the drama of the world's history.

This has been already partly done. We have seen him setting himself to meet a unique crisis in human evolution. In and by his death he did that which, just because it was done faith-

fully by him, added to the conditions of life a factor that makes for ever impossible a recurrence of the conditions under which he died ; so that by its completeness his work remains unrepeatable. No man can ever again enter so deeply with God into experience of the world's sin. Here we have the fact that makes us sure that no other can ever have a like significance in religion. But this does not yet fully answer the demand, for although a unique work would react upon character uniquely, yet the undertaking of it implies a prior uniqueness.

Now all that Jesus was clearly does not depend entirely upon his right use of inherited material, but in part upon the latter itself. The perfect art of his expression, the swiftness and sureness of his thought would either of them standing alone have proved him genius by birth. And he has a sensitiveness, a passion of truth and pity and hope, which in their intensity seem to be the result of the development in conscious life of extraordinary gifts of birth. To recognize this is to do honour to the uniqueness of his moral life, for the greater a man's gifts, the subtler the temptations to which he is exposed, and the higher and costlier the venture to which life calls him.

The problem is whether we can think of the antecedents of Jesus' birth in such a way as to account for those unique elements in him which made it right for him to undertake the unique task in which his life sought its fulfilmen. What that task was we have seen. The

world needed a thought of a God whose love had no reserve of selfconcern, a love unselfish enough to overcome human selfpreference and to bring a man to love his enemies. That thought could in the first instance be achieved and given to the world only by one in whom it was the coefficient of the actual choices of life.

The birth gifts needed in one who was to meet this necessity would be a certain high intensity of altruistic instinct and a certain large measure of those intellectual and emotional qualities that enable and urge a man to inward unification and so create great ethical and religious possibilities. The possibility of such a man being born depended upon the continued development of these racial qualities despite all that opposed them in the prevailing bent to selfinterest. But if we may grant the existence of a tendency to develop higher and higher products along this line a time must ultimately be reached when some human soul knows sin first, not in his own act, but in sorrow at the selfishness of others even when he suffers in result and who therefore therein knows fellowship with God. The choice would be either to return injury for injury, and so side with the injured organism or to share the sorrow of God's great, generous, unselfish love, and so rise to the good that can overcome evil. Given a soul in whom the instinct of altruism and clarity of insight were such that the first moral choice should so present itself, and you have the possibility of Jesus. And

if the thought of God's suffering love can, as it has often done, melt hardened selfishness to a response, it is no miracle that it kept pure from selfishness the heart that was the first to conceive it in a selfish world.

And it is a matter of history that there was such a process at work in the world. We saw that the evolution of the race reached a critical stage in the civilization of the eastern Mediterranean, and that Israel here occupied a peculiar position. Now the outstanding peculiarities of Israel's development are precisely those that lie along the line pointing to the fulfilment of the world's need. In Israel the altruistic instincts were developed to a degree unparalleled elsewhere. There has never been an intenser patriotism than Israel's in the centuries from the Babylonian captivity to the time of Jesus, and no other nation has reached a like level of family altruism, nor of that wider care that shows in, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." They are alone also in the intensity of their ethical sense and religious interest. And up to the time of Jesus their history was marked by the production of men showing an ever higher and higher development of these qualities. So we have in growing self-forgetfulness and sureness of God a series of men like Hosea, Jeremiah, the subject or subjects of Isaiah liii., and the Baptist. Here, then, is a power at work producing ever higher instances in the direction in which it must ultimately reach the quality of Jesus. And

strangely we find in the highest of these intermediate stages, with all their sureness of God, a sense of inward strain and insufficiency, a sense that their vindication lay in something yet to come. Jeremiah, the greatest of the old prophets, cannot himself inaugurate the new covenant: the Baptist speaks of a greater one to come. The nearer they got to the thought of a God whose love was great enough to overcome selfpreference, the more clearly they recognized that they had not what the world needed but the surer they were that it would come.

We have then as the outstanding feature of Israel's history a process which, if continued, must in time reach a point where such a one as Jesus becomes possible. Can we give any more exact account of this process?

There is a very simple law of biology and sociology that will at least suggest a possible way. When any interest dominates a community sufficiently to be a factor in the choice that men and women make of their partners in life (and this is perhaps the best test of its real importance to them), and when this domination is continued for a number of generations, the qualities concerned are intensified and higher and higher instances are produced. This is, of course, only a special case of the well-known biological law by which any quality that determines the choice of mates tends to be preserved and increased. In the world of domesticated animals all improvement

of stock depends upon man's intelligent application of this law, and it is recognized as the cause of a great deal of specialization in nature. It works in human society in a way distinct from both these by bringing ideal interests to control heredity yet without that result being as a rule its conscious aim. Different interests have different degrees of effectiveness in this respect, a man with strong artistic, ethical or religious interests being more likely to marry some one with like tendencies than a man with purely intellectual or business interests. The difficulty of observing the working of this law in human life lies in the rarity with which any one interest is found sufficiently dominant in a society for a sufficient time for its results to be visible. It probably, in part at least, accounts for the remarkably high level of artistic and other attainment reached at certain periods by certain races, as in the human and literary interest of Elizabethan England, the artistic and literary attainments of Athens, the musical achievements of Germany, the renaissance art of Italy, and certain qualities characteristic of most aristocracies.

And we have also to remember that where there is an unusually high general level of ability in any direction there nearly always appear geniuses far in advance even of that high level, as in most of the cases just instanced.

Now for centuries before the time of Jesus Israel had, probably to a greater degree than has ever been the case with any other nation,

been under the domination of one interest, i.e., that of a patriotic and distinctively ethical religion. And during these centuries this interest had segregated them and so secured unparalleled effectiveness for this interest to work in the way suggested. Nor was the exclusiveness of Israel at this stage altogether detrimental to the interest itself; for, though they were conscious of possessing a higher religion and ethic than other nations, they feared too intimate contact with lower levels would result rather in the debasing of their own than in the raising of the other. Their own religion was not high enough to be proof against the danger, for it did not yet possess a positive energy that would transform what it mingled with, and their recognition of this expressed itself in a lack of imperative desire to impart their truth to the world and of faith that it could be done. Even those who were convinced that Israel was to be the light of the Gentiles saw it rather as a coming destiny that as an immediately practical policy.

We have thus a uniquely segregated people living for centuries under a uniquely dominant interest of precisely the sort which, when intense enough, would be a factor in the marriage choice and would tend to produce in ever increasing degree instances of the qualities which, when a certain point was reached, would make such a one as Jesus possible. And we must take into account the production of genius usual to the results of such a process, i.e., of

the man who carries the peculiar development of his race and age to heights far beyond his contemporaries.

We have also to note that this tendency would be more effective in certain sections of the people than in others. Amongst the wealthy and ambitious it would be counteracted by other considerations. Amongst the poor and humble it would have a more undisturbed influence and would find conditions of life to which it would give a needed and otherwise lacking interest and hope. It was from this class that Jesus came, and amongst it that he found his readiest adherents.

When once the man had appeared to whom the thought of God that the world needed was possible, and when the possibility had been realized by his faithfulness and heroism, then the segregation that helped to make him possible must give way to the duty of giving the truth to the world. So that, when Jesus had used rightly the birth gifts that the ages had laboured to bring forth, his achievement shattered the conditions that produced the possibility of such a man. It is worth noting that though the process of segregation did continue in Israel after Jesus it produced no more Jeremiahs or Johns or Pauls, for the interest which through segregation produced the possibility of such men found its true issue in the expansive movement begun by Jesus, while the interest that remained with Israel took on another quality.

This view enables us to see the essential

uniqueness of Jesus without prejudicing his true manhood. It shows us his coming, not as an afterthought of God made possible only by the overriding of His previous work, but as that towards which the whole universe worked. Jesus, so far as the possibilities of his inheritance were concerned, was the response of God given through the resources of His creative outgoing (which we call nature) to the yearning hope and faith of humanity. That God used in this response the ways that we see to be His in the making of the world confirms the recognition of His hand. But we must not forget that the uniqueness of possibility so given by God through "nature" availed nothing without the conscious will of Jesus that realized the possibilities, nor that in so doing he was fully conscious that he was working with and in God.

It may seem offensive to certain minds to be asked to regard sex-selection as a factor that made Jesus possible. But if this relationship is incapable of being spiritualized and made subservient to the highest, then the shame of it is God's, not man's. If it is capable of these things, then one of the chief criterions of the dominance of a spiritual interest is the power to give place and meaning to this powerful instinct.

It is possible, of course, that other factors beside sex-selection played a part in producing the results here attributed to it, but it is the only law as yet recognized by science through which the spiritual interests of men can effect the

natural heredity of the race, and it seems sufficient.

Some may feel that an attempt to bring Jesus into relation with the evolutionary process wrongs it by making the best come before the end. But if we regard that best as coming only through a process of segregation which put an end to itself when it had achieved powers of good that demanded distribution, we see that there was no diminution of values after Jesus but a new factor in human evolution working in a new way.

The world-history that gives meaning to the uniqueness of Jesus finds in so doing its own interpretation. We see our semihuman ancestors becoming conscious of manhood by the rising in their hearts of a question and a struggle to which his heart alone held the answer. We see in the otherwise meaningless welter of tribes and nations and empires the birth-travail of the world to bring forth him who could give it the truth by which to live. We see, in his following, the way in which the age-long evolutionary process may be caught up by the conscious will of man working in fellowship with God to bring in His Kingdom.

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